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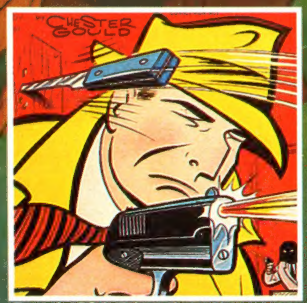

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COMICS scene

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STARLOG PRESENTS

COMICS SCENE

Issue No. 3 March

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ABOUT THE COVER: Those friendly characters surrounding animator Don Bluth will star in his first production, *The Secret of NIMH*, coming this July. The preview of the film and tour of the studio begins on page 26. Art © 1982 Don Bluth; Swamp Thing © 1982 DC Comics/Embassy Pictures; Dick Tracy courtesy the Lenny Kaye Collection; and Astro Boy courtesy Jerry Beck.

Production Assistants: Norma Garcia, Eileen Dempsey, Cindy Levine and Susan Oster.
For Advertising Information: Rita Eisenstein (212) 689-2830.

Word Balloons

This and That

As we work on this issue, mail is just starting to come in on #2 and we must admit, we're pleased. It seems we have accomplished what we have set out to do and you readers agree with us. Now that we've been around for a short while, we're beginning to get a sense of what you readers like and don't like; what you want to see more or less of. In just an issue or two, you'll be able to notice how we've complied with those wishes.

But for now, let me just discuss a few of the things we are doing so you understand how we're working. For example, people have asked us to review publications. We're not going to do that because by the time we publish the review, the book or comic may already be sold out, or the next edition may even be on the stands. This especially holds true for comic books. Our news columns will alert you to the newest publications from the small press publishers but as for reviews, that's what the Lettering column is there for. If you loved something, or hated it, write in and tell us. Someone may disagree and the column will freely debate an issue.

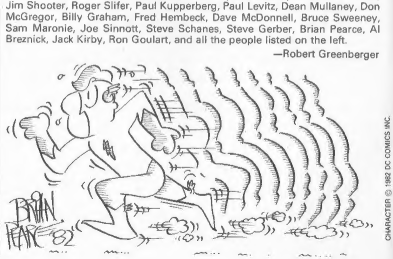
On the other hand, we will not turn our letters column into a battlefield. Each issue's column will center on a single issue and we'll run responsible letters of comment. If you want to call someone a name, don't tell us about it.

We seem to be evenly split as to whether or not we should run our Character Profiles series. Until we get a definitive answer, it shall continue to run, with the second installment in this issue. Readers who do not like the concept have been sending in plenty of suggestions and, with luck, we'll get to most of them. I'd like to note two suggestions: the first, the high demand for a Wolverine profile and the other is the request for E-Man, a relatively unknown character from the seventies who is much loved around the office.

One other request has surprised us. There have been many letters requesting more coverage of Saturday morning television, an area we originally believed was widely disliked by our audience. Fear not, we have plans afoot to do more coverage in this field, along with more animation coverage. You can look forward to a retrospective on the Fleisher Studios, a look at Nelvana's *Drats!* and a chat with independent animator Sally Cruikshank, and that's all coming after this issue's cover story on Don Bluth Studios.

Before we close, I'd like to thank a few of the people who have helped us with these first three issues. They have been there to supply us with art, photostats, news, gossip, support, friendship and plenty of laughs during the usual craziness. On behalf of Howard and myself, thank you Howard Cruse, Jim Shooter, Roger Slifer, Paul Kupperberg, Paul Levitz, Dean Mullaney, Don McGregor, Billy Graham, Fred Hembeck, Dave McDonnell, Bruce Sweeney, Sam Maronie, Joe Sinnott, Steve Schanes, Steve Gerber, Brian Pearce, Al Breznick, Jack Kirby, Ron Goulart, and all the people listed on the left.

—Robert Greenberger



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Lettering

The Response is In

It's just about unanimous! Our first issue has received overwhelming positive comments from the readers, making us all feel that the job has been worth it. We have read each and every letter that was sent in but as we warned you, we can't answer you all. Keep those cards and letters coming. Without your ideas, questions and comments, we couldn't bring you the magazine YOU want. Send them to:

Lettering
COMICS SCENE
475 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10016

More First Issue Comments

. . . Hi! I'm writing to you to congratulate you on your first issue of COMICS SCENE. I was a bit skeptical about spending half of my allowance on a magazine but boy, was I surprised! Being a comic-book and comic-art collector, the idea of a magazine that was filled with information about comics was great! So I went to the nearest dealer, bought your dynamite magazine and read the whole thing in about five hours. So now all I can say is, BRAVO!

Chris Nathan

Dear editor,

. . . Years ago, I read something (I don't remember where) that intrigued me at the time and that I've heard repeated at various times since then (I don't remember exactly where I heard and read these repetitions either—don't I have a good memory?). It went more or less as follows: Comic collecting is not a true or recognized hobby; it's just a pastime that a few people engage in, but who have not yet systematized or organized the field enough to make it a valid hobby. And one of the marks of a true hobby is that a specialty mag for the hobby can be found someplace other than a store devoted to that hobby. (Thus indicating general acceptance and recognition of the hobby.)

Well, now we've got COMICS SCENE, a comics-centered magazine that is generally available. (Though, come to think of it, I haven't seen it on a newsstand yet, so I'm taking its "general distribution" as a fact based only upon your sayso.) Just like those guys who collect coins, or run model trains, or like to peer at the sky through a telescope. So I guess we've arrived. . . . so who cares? Well, I thought it was worth noting—but having said that, the prime concern is still the validity of the field itself, which depends only to a small degree on the acceptance of "outsiders".

And what did I think of issue #1 itself? Of course, it's much too early to form a definitive opinion, but briefly: it was bright and breezy (like STARLOG), but unlike STARLOG, which seems to assume some familiarity with SF on the part of the reader, CS seems geared to a person unfamiliar with comics fandom. But given the relative sizes of SF and comics fandoms and that this *is* a general-distribution mag, that slant can only be taken as good sense.

"T.M. Maple"

Dear COMICS SCENE,

. . . I really enjoyed your premiere issue. You have the potential to be as big as STARLOG (maybe bigger).

I enjoyed your Marvel article but it could've been better. Instead of reviewing Marvel's past and future projects, you showed us a company that looks like it's falling apart at the seams! Articles like this, I predict, will depress the reader (it depressed me) and drive 'em away.

Chris Ayers
4285 Green Acres Drive
Ooltewah, TN 37363

We feel that articles like out first cover story will attract readers who wish to see in-depth, factual pieces that tell things like they are. Marvel is not falling apart at the seams—Jim Shooter claims they have been making more money than ever. If we were to say only nice things about Marvel then we would be criticized as pandering to the big interests and publishers. We want to be fair to all.

Dear Sirs,

. . . I really enjoyed your premiere issue of COMICS SCENE. That article on the Phantom was breathtaking! After I read it, I immediately flew to my huge pile of newspapers and found out that the Phantom was in them. I read every one.

The part I liked most was the Character Profile. I never really was a fan of Swamp Thing, but when I read this, I'll be the first on line to see the movie. Other ideas for characters are Wolverine, Changeling, Wonder Man and a hero lost somewhere, E-Man.

Ronald Brynaert
21 Victoria Drive
Newburgh, NY 12550

The Editor:

. . . I have just finished your first issue and I have to say that my feelings are mixed towards it. I would have liked more pages to it; however, what you gave me covered a broad spectrum.

I think *Heavy Metal* is better and on the upswing with better content since Mr. White left. I felt he was causing its demise as editor, the same as he did with *Amazing* and *Fantastic*.

I feel strongly that another look should be given to Marvel before Stan Lee or Mr. Shooter grab hold of the Bible and give us another version of how they created the world. Perhaps a look by you at DC would help?

I did enjoy *Scorchy Smith* by Ron Goulart and look forward to other articles by him. Plus, my all-time favorite adventure strip—*The Phantom*.

Walter J. Hibbert Jr.
272 Ward Avenue, Apt. 4K
Bordentown, NJ 08505

Average Age: 11½—BULL

Gentlemen and Ladies,

. . . Re: Dalton's idea that the average comics reader is 11½ years old: BULL. If you look at the letters page of any comic you will see that either most letters are written by people well over 11½ or else we've got a lot of really smart kids out there. I'm 24 and I started reading comics when I was 14.

James O'Kelly Jr.
250 Avenue B
Bayonne, NJ 07002

Gentlemen,

. . . It is quite a pity that the people who control the production of Marvel Comics believe that their main audience is of prepubescent children. This is an even bigger mistake than forgetting that audience. It is also a big part of the reason why comics didn't sell like they did in the sixties and early seventies.

The largest segment of our nation's population was born in the 12 years between 1949 and 1961. At the peak of this "baby boom," 4.5 million babies were born, among them being myself. Now the youngest "boomers" are over 20 years old.

The target age of Marvel's readership is no longer as numerous as it once was. Perhaps a more mature format would attract a more mature (and more numerous) audience.

Bertram Brinkley
4277 Larson St. Apt. 89
Marysville, CA 95901

Don't Fall into the Trap

To the Editor:

. . . Pressure groups such as the violent-sounding Action for Children's Television attack all sorts of characters from Bugs to *Sesame Street*'s own Cookie Monster, not just animated superheroes. Don't fall into the same conceited paranoia trap *Famous Monsters of Filmland* is in; *FM* and its readers like to believe they are the only people in the world receiving criticism, then in its defense it will lash out at some other genre, sky, comics, and label it as the true cause of every misfortune since the dawn of time.

Despite the ridiculous restrictions placed upon them, today's Saturday morning cartoons (*The Bugs Bunny/Road Runner Show* excluded) don't have to aim at just one age group. I'd like to watch some of the shows your article mentions, but the quality of their animation would just put me to sleep.

William A. Day
27 Linden Street
Bangor, Maine 04401

Dear Mr. Zimmerman:

. . . I must admit I am concerned that you will fall into the flaws that STARLOG and your other sister magazines often are subject to, i.e. occasional patronizing attitudes towards the readers, and gushing articles that read like press releases. I sensed some of this sort of thing in Adam Malin's piece on fandom, and Sam Maronie's review of Saturday morning TV animation. Certainly, fandom merits a look in your magazine, but not the overblown job Malin supplied you with. The article assumes that fandom virtually built sf and fantasy film & TV to what it is today, with the underlying assumption that special effects are everything. I believe both assumptions are false, and do a real disservice to the genre and to its fans.

My interest in Saturday morning TV animation is particularly strong, and my bias may be showing. But Maronie's article seems too easily content with the extremely low standards of Saturday morning TV standards, which in some ways (certainly in the animators' technical competence) have declined in the last 20 years. I hope you will at least balance articles on this part of TV animation, with pieces on animation done for prime time, and in the field of commercials. Much more ambitious work is being done in those two categories.

Despite those two previous paragraphs, this is a favorable letter, as I liked the majority of what you selected for your first issue. You've chosen a good mix of interests between newspaper comics, comic books, TV and movies, and I hope that balance stays (I have a particular liking for the newspaper strips, and pieces about comics in other countries, so please don't let those slip past you). So, let me repeat my wishes of good luck, both creatively and financially for COMICS SCENE.

Jim Meadows
PO Box 1227
Pekin, IL 61554

What's Taking So Long?

Dear COMICS SCENE,

. . . I can't wait till *Conan* is released, and have been waiting for the *Silver Surfer* movie for a long time. How come they're only in the pre-production stages? And when are they going to start filming?

Justin Leiter
137-29 79 St.
Howard Beach, NY 11414

You're going to have to wait a little longer for Conan since the release was delayed once again—this time to Memorial Day Weekend. The Silver Surfer *has gone through numerous personnel changes and financial problems. They're also trying to perfect the right special effects so you will believe a man can fly a surfboard.*

The REAL Triumph

. . . I disagree with what Paul Levitz says about "The Triumph of Comics Fandom." I see lots of growth but not much triumph. What has comics fandom really produced?

A generally accepted price guide with the current values of comics. Local comics-specialty shops. A large marketplace for buying and selling comics. Original comics material.

But fans 100 years from now will look back on The Dawn of Comic Fandom, and declare that the greatest early fan accomplishment was the publication of *The Menomonee Falls Gazette*, which this fandom failed to adequately support—preferring instead to spend money on comic books with endless repetitions of superhero battles. How many long years must it be before comic fandom is willing to support such a publication?

As far as I'm concerned, comics fandom peaked during the publication of *The Gazette*, and has been in retreat ever since (though it has continued to grow). We didn't win—we lost.

Bruce Long
Los Angeles, California

The Gazette was a publication from Street Enterprises, the folks bringing you The Comics Reader. *It was a regular publication*

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This Month In FANGORIA

YOU'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT!

SUMMER PREVIEWS

E.G. Marshall in *Creepshow*.

Visit the sets of *Creepshow* and *The Thing* along with our roving editor Bob Martin; gasp in wonder at the awesome plans for *The Beastmaster*, the sword and sorcery epic from Don Coscarelli, director of *Phantasm*; shriek with terror as you observe the filming of *Rest In Pieces* (a.k.a. *RIP*)—it's all part of our special preview issue, offering you advance glimpses of what we think will be a milestone Summer of Fear!

Meanwhile, among current fear films, Paul Schrader's *Cat People* will be reaching neighborhood theaters just days before our next issue hits the stands. Does that mean that Universal will be releasing special behind-the-scenes effects stills so we can tell you about the wonders of Tom Burman's creations for the film? That's what we're waiting to find out! However, we will be talking to Burman about his effects for *The Beast Within*, United Artist's current monster epic—that's a promise!

Home video enthusiasts have long wondered why some of the greatest modern horror classics—like *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Last House on the Left* and *Dawn of the Dead*—have not been available on cassette. Investigative reporter Dave Everitt has the scoop, as he examines the past, present and future of The Video of Violence!

Once again, these are just hints of what's to come between the covers of our next action-packed issue! We'll be introducing you to comics-artist-turned-production-designer Mike Ploog! Up-and-coming makeup artist Kevin Haney! Feisty film producer Herman (*I Was a Teenage Werewolf*, *Watch Me When I Kill*) Cohen! The 50-Foot First Lady of Fantasy Films, Allison Hayes! And so much more, it'll surprise even us!

YOU'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT!

FANGORIA #18
ON SALE: APRIL 6!!!!

devoted to running the best continuity strips available—both current and classic. It even spun off a sister publication that ran "comic" strips. Both failed to attract enough readers and the publishers, Mike Tiffenbacher and Jerry Sinkovec, ran into severe financial problems. The strips were incorporated into TCR *with issue 164, where they remain today.*

It's Not Silly

Dear Sirs,

. . . I am writing you in response to Robert Greenberger's one-word dismissal of my strip, "Rock Opera," as "silly" in his otherwise balanced and informative article about *Heavy Metal* magazine. I can't help but feel that his comment was both cruel and overly casual.

Perhaps if Mr. Greenberger had taken the opportunity to read some of the back episodes of "Rock Opera" (which go back, on a monthly basis, for over two years), he might not have been quite so harsh in his judgement. I have tried consistently to substitute plot and graphic detail for what I consider to be the mindless violence and assembly-line artwork of too many other American comic strips.

I invite your readers to pick up a copy of *Heavy Metal* and judge for themselves whether or not this ambition is "silly."

Rod Kierkegaard, Jr.
Rye, NY

Enough is Enough

Dear Publisher O'Quinn,

. . . I had great difficulty finding COMICS SCENE, but I finally found #1 at a convention, and saw it later at a newsstand.

Thanks for the *Destroyer Duck* discussion on p. 6. After reading the article I cancelled an advance order for the "comic" at my dealer. There's no point in buying choreographed snuff-and-splatter violence, just to support a lawsuit. There has to be a better way. Steve Gerber, Jack Kirby, and Aragones are by no means any favorites of mine. The filth in *Steward the Rat*, also by Steve Gerber, prevented me from buying that, either.

Howard Cruse is not invited to any future funerals in my family. I'm afraid he'll find them hilariously funny, judging by the callous *filth* he wrote in *Eclipse*'s comics.

Paul R. Wilson
19 Sunset Place
Bergenfield, NJ 07821 ■

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Comics Reporter

DC COMICS

Editorial and Title Reorganization

As DC Comics places more emphasis on its special projects line, Dave Manak has given up editing all but one of his newsstand titles, causing a shifting of titles among other editors. Manak gains the title of special projects editor and will work with editorial director Joe Orlando and his assistants Nick Cuti and Andrew Helfer.

"I've worked with Joe Orlando for the last 10 years and it seems kind of natural to me to jump to the department he's heading," Manak told us in late January. "Joe has had a big influence on my comic work and my comic art. I'll still be doing regular comic books for some of our special projects like Mattel and Atari."

Manak will retain *Amethist, Princess of Gem World*, scheduled to premiere in *Warlord* #60, on sale in May, and the first issue of the new title follows a month later.

As the Manak titles were being redistributed, two of the dollar comics were reduced to 60¢ titles. *Superman Family* has been cancelled with #222 in June to be replaced by the *New Adventures of Supergirl* and *World's Finest* becomes a standard-sized comic with #283. Green Arrow will be the title's sole back-up feature. Julie Schwartz has expressed an interest in picking up the Hawkman series and the Shazam! series will have a regular home in the revived *Adventure Comics*. That title may or may not be digest-sized as originally announced.

Len Wein picks up the reduced-sized *WF* and *Green Lantern* from Dave Manak, giving him a total of eight regular titles, three annuals, the *Teen Titans* mini-series and *Camelot 3000*, the year-long maxi-series, premiering in September. To make room in the schedule, Wein has given *Wonder Woman* to Laurie Sutton and the *Unknown Soldier* will be cancelled with issue #268.

Sutton, a long-time *Wonder Woman* fan, will be the title's first female editor since it was created 40 years ago. She says the book will go more into

PHOTOS: JOHN CLAYTON

Dave Manak, left, moves to Special Projects and Laurie Sutton, right, inherits *Wonder Woman*.

WW's character and her role as an Amazon. "She'll be able to lift mountains again," Sutton told us. "I want her to have more of a personality, make her more of an Amazon. I have a lot of ideas and schemes hatching."

Gene Colan art from *Dark Force*.

Also affected by the shifting around are the three *Batman* titles still edited by managing editor Dick Giordano. He wanted to turn them over to Wein but now will keep them. And until a slot is found, Manak will also hang on to *Captain Carrot and His Amazing Zoo Crew*.

While new titles and annuals are planned, talk continues around the offices of giving several back-up strips their own book. *Dr. Fate*, the *Huntress* and *Arion, Lord of Atlantis* are the three most often mentioned but no official announcements have been made.

Here's a look at what to expect in the next several months:

APRIL: *Dark Force* by Marv Wolfman, Gene Colan and Bob Smith previews in *Teen Titans* #21. This series was originally announced as *The Challengers*.

MAY: *Dark Force* #1 premieres. *Legion Annual* #1 by Paul Levitz and Keith Giffen features the return of Computo and introduces a new Legionnaire. *Warlord* #60 previews *Gem World*.

JUNE: *Sgt. Rock Annual* #2, *Superman Annual* #9 by Wolfman and Rich Buckler, and the last issue of *Superman Family*. *Gem World* #1 by Gary Cohn, Dan Mishkin and Ernie Colon premieres. *Pandora Pann* by Wein, Ross Andru and Giordano previews in *Swamp Thing* #5. *World's Finest*'s first 60¢ issue appears. Carl Gafford's *Binky* digest also appears featuring Sugar and Spike and funny animal comic characters from the past.

JULY: *Warlock Annual* #1 by Mike Grell, *Batman Annual* #8 by Mike W. Barr and Trevor Von Eeden, and *All-Star Annual* #1 by Roy Thomas and Adrian Gonzales. *Pandora Pann* #1 appears as the last *Unknown Soldier* wraps up the last plot lines.

AUGUST: *New Adventures of Supergirl* by Paul Kupperberg and Carmine Infantino appears along with *Swamp Thing Annual* #1 adapting the Embassy movie by Len Wein and, tentatively, Tony DeZuniga. *Teen Titans Annual* #1 by Marv Wolfman and George Perez will also turn up.

SEPTEMBER: *Camelot 3000* by Mike W. Barr and Brian Bolland appears after a delay.

ART: © 1980 DC COMICS INC.

Marvel Offers Own Royalty Plan

As expected, Marvel Comics countered DC's unprecedented royalty payment program with one of their own. The plan, explained to freelance artists and writers and all contracted staff in early January, is almost point for point the same as DC's.

Marvel's plan differs in only a few ways, the most notable being that it is not retroactive. DC's plan, as detailed last issue, began paying royalties on all comics released in July, when DC raised their cover price to 60¢. Also, for the few back-up strips Marvel uses, no royalties will be paid.

Marvel editor-in-chief Jim Shooter explained at the January press conference that DC introduced their plan because they were convinced Marvel would never be able to counter the move. "I think we surprised them," he said. He pointed out that with the 100,000 mark being used to determine when royalties will be paid, Marvel will be able to pay more people than DC because they sell more copies. As an example, Shooter pointed to *Dazzler*, an average-selling title, and said only three DC titles will pay more.

"It really cost us a fortune," Shooter added. "We don't have 'Daddy Warnerbucks' to fall back on." He was referring to Warner Communications, DC's parent company. The royalties pay four percent of the cover price for all copies sold over 100,000 with one percent going to a creative team if the book was created since January 1.

Shooter said in early February that as a result of their instituting the royalty program, the entire page rate structure went under review. Some people such as Frank Miller and John Byrne received sizeable raises as a result of their fan market appeal. With the royalties, Shooter found himself in the position of asking for portions of those raises back. "For example, if someone got a $10 raise, we'd maybe ask for $4 back. Roger Stern was asked to turn back $1 per page," he said. In all, most staffers at Marvel received rate increases while others remained the same and few actual received lower rates. This was done, he said, to "keep everything into proper alignment considering the changing market and company policy.

DC COMICS

Odds and Ends

CONNIE HATCH has joined the staff as their new proofreader, replacing Tamsyn O'Flynn, who now assists editorial coordinator Karen Berger and managing editor Dick Giordano . . . **MIKE PLOOG** is in England doing story boards for *Superman III*, expected to get into production by summer's end . . . **MIKE USLAN** reports that his *Batman* film will have five or so months of preproduction prior to an October start date.

Expect to see this film in late 1983 . . . **GIL KANE** has done covers for Len Wein's new titles, *World's Finest* and *Green Lantern* . . . DC reports that Pacific Comics' announcement last issue about DC Indexes was premature since the details are still being worked out . . . **EDITORIAL DIRECTOR** Joe Orlando and managing editor Dick Giordano went to England to speak with artists about doing work for DC. At present, only

Round-Up

FRANK MILLER tells us that he has agreed to do a graphic novel for Marvel. The novel will introduce a new concept of Miller's but because of his workload on *Daredevil* and the *Wolverine* limited series, it will be four months or so before he can get to it. Part of the deal will allow Miller to do a *Daredevil* graphic novel . . . **SILVER SURFER** is still in development by Lee Kramer. Now that he has broken up with singer Olivia Newton-John, her involvement with the project has ended. As for financing, it has been reported that they have received some money from independent sources and the film, still scripted by Stan Lee, will be made down in Australia. Two writers have worked on Lee's script and complain they still haven't been paid for their work. This is one film that may be a long time in coming . . . **SO TOO** the *Ghost Rider*. Once DeLaurentis' option on the character has ended, leaving the demonic cycler without a silver screen debut . . . **CBS THEATRICAL FILMS** has announced plans for a movie featuring the *Fantastic Four*. Stan Lee was listed as producer with Lawrence J. Block as screenwriter. No other information was available at press time . . . **CAROL KALISH**, editor at New Media Publishing, has left her post to become Assistant Sales Manager under Mike Friedrich. She began on March 1 and has moved down to New York with boy friend/fellow editor Richard Howell. No replacement has been announced by NMP.

Brian Bolland is doing any work for DC and his colleague, John Bolton, is the only English artist producing work for Marvel's domestic comics.

WARREN

New Editor, New Distributor Take Over

Timothy Moriarty, formerly a freelance editor and writer, was named editor of the black and white Warren comics line in late 1981. The move was to fill in the gap created when Jim Stenstrom resigned as editor last year.

Moriarty, 30, will edit *Creepy, Eerie, Vampirella, The Rook* and *1994*.

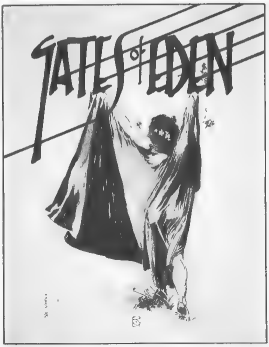
"I want to give each magazine a distinct look and feel," Moriarty told us in December. And he wants to look for new artists, remembering the days when people like Frank Brunner were just starting out. Still feeling new at the game, Moriarty is taking his time going through inventory material left behind by various editors, all the way back to Louise Jones. He also is going to try his hand at scripting stories when he isn't writing for *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, still edited by Forry Ackerman.

Supporting the editorial staff is David Allikas, a writer who has freelanced for both Marvel and DC.

Beginning in December, all of Warren's distribution was being handled by Warner Publisher Services, formerly Independent News. WPS now handles all the Warren and DC titles.

For mainstays in the titles have been announced as a result of the editorial shifting. Some experiments, such as the *Pantha* one-shot, have met with great success and any hopes for a *Pantha* magazine have been shelved.

Two Great New Magazines!



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New and Revised Titles From All Over

ART: © 1982 RICK GEARY

Rick Geary's view of the 1960s.

FANTACO

Hot on the heels of the just released *Daredevil* and *Fantastic Four Chronicles*, editor Mitch Cohn promises the *Avengers Chronicles* for April. All that was confirmed at presstime was a wraparound cover by George Perez, an inside front cover by Michael T. Gilbert, the centerspread and one page strip by Fred Hembeck, the usual checklist and an in-depth interview with Jim Shooter. The fifth book in the series will be coming in June and spotlights *Spider-Man*. Edited by Roger Green, the volume will concentrate on just his solo appearances in *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Spectacular Spider-Man*. Frank Miller will do the wraparound cover and the feature interview will be with editor Tom DeFalco.

Cohn says everyone at the Fantaco offices in Albany, N.Y. are excited about the *Gates of Eden* magazine, set to premiere in March. The amount of talent committed to the first two issues alone give them high hopes for success. The 48 page, $3.50 magazine is being printed on white glossy paper, and with a quarterly schedule, hopes to ease into the fan marketplace. Issue one is a 1960s issue with editor Cohn asking his contributors to supply personal accounts of the time. The contributors list includes Mike Kaluta, John Byrne, Trina Robbins, Lee Marrs, Kim Deitch, Spain, Foolbert Sturgeon, Fred Hembeck, Michael T. Gilbert, Steve Leialoha, P. Craig Russell, Rock Geary, and Jim Starlin.

So far, Cohn says the committed line-up for *#2* amazes even him. The issue, due in June, features a logo and cover by Jeff Jones and stories and art from the likes of Hembeck, Neal Adams, Leonard Rifas, Gilbert, Deitch, Raul Vezina, Charles Vess, George Perez and Frank Miller

PACIFIC COMICS

The rights have been finally secured for Pacific to publish movie-tie-ins on *Blade Runner*, the Ladd Co. movie scheduled for a June 25 release. While Marvel is publishing the comics adaption, publisher Steve Schanes told us they will be releasing an Illustrated Screenplay (similar to the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* book last fall), Sketchbook, and poster-sized portfolio of photos of the major characters. Twelve photos are expected to be included in the portfolio.

Response to the Rocketeer back-up strip in *Starslayer* by Dave Stevens has prompted Pacific to make one of their new mini-series half-Steve Ditko and half-Stevens. The Ditko cover feature will be new and should be out later this year. Other books are planned but none announced as yet.

ART: © 1982 GIL KANE

FANTAGRAPHICS

Publisher Gary Groth promises release of Gil Kane's *Savage* at the beginning of spring. The long-awaited new edition of Kane's 1968 black and white graphic novel will sport a new Kane cover and two new pages of story.

Savage was one of the first independent press publications in the United States and was planned to be an on-going magazine but problems with the distributor and printers forced Kane to abandon the project after the first issue, which commands high prices in the collector's market.

The story, by Archie Goodwin and Kane, is supplemented by an introduction by R.C Harvey and insightful interview with Kane on *Savage*'s origins and background. The book will be released to direct sales shops only with a $2.50 cover price for 52 pages.

Savage is a particularly violent story and was Kane's response to the industry at the time. Kane told Groth, "I tried to make the character of Savage a threatening, relentless personality, and I tried to key the violence, a kind of no-nonsense abrupt violence. In other words, it was always done as bottom-line action."

ART: © 1982 STEVE DITKO

Another Steve Ditko creation will appear in *Fantasy Illustrated* from New Media soon.

JOHN CARBONARO

By now, astute fans will have seen the first issue of *JCS Features*, featuring the return of the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents. Expected in late March-early April is the first issue of the Agents' own magazine while May will bring *JCP #2* featuring *Space Giants*. *Giants* s a comics adaptation of a live-action Japanese television series about giant robots and seen on some U.S. Cable networks.

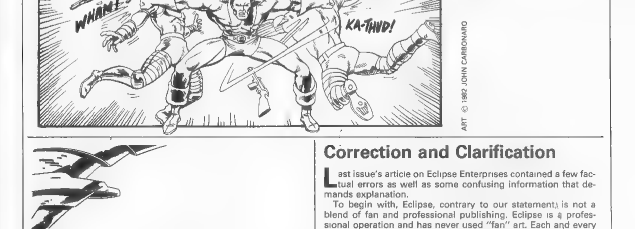
Publisher Carbonaro says the two quarterly books will be printed magazine-size on pulp paper in black and white. Depending on reader reaction, *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* may be in color.

Expected for the summer is the first of a semi-annual team-up title featuring T.H.U.N.D.E.R. and MLJ's Mighty Crusaders (Fly, Fly Girl, Shield, Comet and Black Hood) If there is enough positive reaction and sales, the Crusaders are expected to get their own title, featuring the Fly and one of the two versions of the Shield.

Carbonaro is interested in presenting the best possible professional art and story featuring characters long-neglected by the publishers and fans He has the rights to reprint some of the old MLJ/Archie super-hero stories and will do so on a case by case basis but he says that isn't his intention. The Neal Adams Black Hood story and Simon & Kirby Fly are to reintroduce fans to the characters and are noteworthy because of their creators.

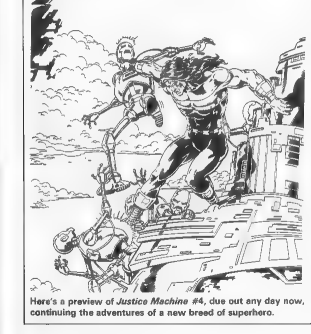
Plans remain unsettled for the *JCP* title, a showcase for potential new series. He expects Dynamo, star of the T.H.U.N.-D.E.R. Agents, to get a try-out and possibly his own title in the future. And we are promised that these stories will let the readers know who the characters are as opposed to the old slam-bang pure-action, no-character stories of the 60s.

Carbonaro is utilizing the talents of Richmond Studio, run by Pat Gabriele and newcomer Mark Texeira (currently filling in on *Warlord*). Dan Adkins, who assisted Wally Wood on the original T.H.U.N.D.E.R. titles, 15 years ago, is returning to the latest incarnation and creating a new Menthor Menthor was the first major super-hero to die a real, long-lasting death. The new character will turn up in the *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*, along with the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Squad, Lightning, Raven, No Man and Dynamo.



Dynamo and the T.H.U N.D.E.R. agents return in new adventures. Here's art from the first story, out now.

ART: © 1980 JOHN CARBONARO



Here's a preview of *Justice Machine* #4, due out any day now, continuing the adventures of a new breed of superhero.

Correction and Clarification

Last issue's article on Eclipse Enterprises contained a few factual errors as well as some confusing information that demands explanation.

To begin with, Eclipse, contrary to our statement, is not a blend of fan and professional publishing. Eclipse is a professional operation and has never used "fan" art. Each and every contributor is a professional in his or her own right.

Also, Eclipse—the company preceded Marvel's *Epic Illustrated* in granting creators their own copyright, a policy publisher Dean Mullaney began with *Sabre* in 1978.

Mullaney also wanted us to point out that he is not in the business solely for the money. His final statement, "I don't hang out with comic book people when I'm not working; it's just work," was from a discussion about Mullaney's need for time away from comics, time devoted to his love of movies and playing guitar.

Detectives Inc., contrary to the article's statement, received generally favorable reviews, including many from outside of the comics field. Many of the prominent detective magazines gave the book highly positive comments. *The Comics Journal* was the only magazine to run a truly negative review.

Finally, Raymond Rohauer should be credited as the man who saved many of Buster Keaton's films over the years. Rohauer is the man who put together the current Keaton Film Festival touring cities around the country. William Hogarth, the artist for the Keaton magazine from Eclipse, never worked with Keaton and only with the estate.

COMICS SCENE deeply regrets these errors and any trouble they may have caused Mullaney, Don McGregor or Marshall Rogers.

We described last issue's cover as being executed by Alan Huck and Ric Gonzalez based on a sketch by Jack Kirby. In reality, Kirby turned the photograph over to the Ruby Spears animators and they designed and painted the cel featuring the *Captain Victory* characters. Kirby's only involvement was approval of the finished work and, of course, the inspiration.

And Now, *Sally Forth*

by Greg Howard

Sally Forth's struggle to be both mother and career woman.

Greg Howard did not always want to be a cartoonist. In fact, the creator of the hot new syndicated newspaper strip, *Sally Forth*, didn't even know how to draw until a couple of years ago.

Today, however, the former anti-trust lawyer from Minneapolis is getting all the drawing practice he needs while pursuing his new dream. And, after debuting on January 4, *Sally Forth* is already sallying forth in over 70 papers across the country, including such major ones as the *Los Angeles Times*, *Detroit Free Press*, *Miami Herald*, *Boston Globe*, *Bergen Record*, and Howard's hometown *Minneapolis Tribune*.

Howard, a modest, soft-spoken man in his mid-thirties, quit his lucrative position as a partner in a large Minneapolis law firm three years ago to follow his quest. Although he had never really drawn cartoons before and had no prospects for success, he set out to transform himself into a successful syndicated cartoonist.

"I was not really dissatisfied with the law firm [Faegre and Benson]," the native Minnesotan said, although he was "not head over heels in love with it" either. "I was just so interested in seeing if I could become a cartoonist."

It was not an easy decision. Despite the responsibilities of a growing family, Howard left a post paying close to $100,000 a year for the land of comic strips. He also bid farewell to the long-term security and daily pressures of his law career. "I left that to come home and be by myself all day," he said. "It took a bit of soul-searching to arrive at the decision."

After two years of self-instruction, practice, and at least two false starts, Howard finally created *Sally Forth* and sold it to Field Syndicate. In his strip, the main character humorously struggles to keep her sanity despite all the trials and tribulations of being a working wife and mother. Sally gets little help or sympathy from the still growing cast of supporting characters, which includes her white-collar husband, precocious young daughter, male boss, female secretary, and some-what old-fashioned mother

Howard, "an avid comic strip reader all my life," said he seeks the same level of character interplay that made Charles Schulz's *Peanuts* strip an early favorite of his. "I felt strongly [about *Peanuts*] in the 1950s and 1960s," he said, especially "the little kids sitting around discussing life. . . . That's the sort of interaction I aspire to."

A tall order—especially for an anti-trust lawyer whose only previous forays in humor had been short skits for his firm's annual Christmas parties. But the odds bother Howard even less than Minneapolis' notorious Siberian winters.

"I'm certainly pleased with it," Howard said, sounding like a cartoonist who had just sold the paperback rights to his first book of comic strips (which he has). "I'm a real babe in the woods in this business but it sounds good and exciting."

ANIMATION

Here Comes Bill Melendez—Again!

Garfield ala Melendez and company.

This spring, CBS-TV will air yet another animated family special produced by Bill Melendez Productions. Known for the adventures of good ol' Charlie Brown and his *Peanuts* friends, Melendez and company are now giving life to Jim Davis' feline, *Garfield*.

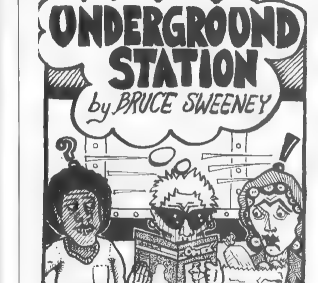
Based on his long and successful track record, he confidently stepped out on his own in 1964 and formed his own production studio. He joined forces with Lee Mendelson, a documentary film producer, for an animated special for CBS-TV, United Feature Syndicate, the company that distributed Charles Schulz' *Peanuts* strip to newspapers throughout the world, was looking for a competent animation company to bring the strip to the small screen. They couldn't have made a better choice—the Mendelson-Melendez special, *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, won both Emmy and Peabody awards. Since then, the duo have produced over 20 TV specials and four feature films about the *Peanuts* troup which, along with their other projects, have garnered 11 Emmy Awards in the past 18 years.

One major problem that any animator always faces when adapting a comic strip character onto film is the difficulty in imitating the drawing style of the character's creator. "Artists cannot imitate another fellow's drawing, it's like his signature. There's so many things that come out of the mind of the originator that he expresses in his drawings that he never articulates. He just does these things. So when he comes to us, we take over and sometimes draw two things that are not commonly done by the artist, so he has to pull us back.

"For example, with Garfield, his eyes are always at half-mast. They're always touching the upper lid. Unless they're wide open, they never leave the lid line. If that's a point we're not aware of, we may start animating and keep them open, and that's not in character. It just takes a little bit of give and take, communicating with the artist until we solve all the problems."

Melendez is happy that the syndicate had enough confidence in his track record with *Peanuts* to award *Garfield* to him. Once he and his partner agreed to tackle the project, Jim Davis penned the script for the special with Mendelez' help. Besides concern of the look of the project, Davis also became involved in the sound of the project, especially since the dialogue had to be recorded first. Unlike Snoopy, who has never actually spoken in the animated productions, Garfield cannot operate without his voice. Although he doesn't actually talk, Garfield, like Morris the Cat, will think out loud. Mendelez is pleased that Davis agreed in the casting of Lorenzo Music to provide Garfield's voice." Music's voice became well known when he played the heard, but never seen, character of Carlton the Doorman in the *Rhoda* TV series he co-produced a few years back for CBS. "For my thinking," comments Melendez, "he really brings that cat to life."

Melendez is hoping the Garfield special will turn out as good as his past work, but he's still pessimistic. "We don't sit down and say, 'We're gonna do a masterpiece.' We sit down and *hope* we're gonna do a masterpiece."



KITCHEN SINK
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Denis Kitchen writes that *Gay Comix* #1 is getting sour response as a title, perhaps because of its controversial material but that the specialized gay bookshop network is making up for it. The title is destined for a second printing.

Omaha, (Bizarre Sex #9) has just been busted in England according to Kitchen. Knockabout Comix, the English distrioutor, had a full shipment seized. It seems that the English consider *all* comix "juvenile fare" and do not distinguish adult comix regardless of any disclaimer or the context of the "objectionable" matter. The decision is being appealed.

Phoebe and the Pigeon People #3 is also out now in a new format from Kitchen Sink and retails for $1.50 for 36 pages done by Jay Lynch and Gary Whitney. Kitchen also has Cat Yronwode editing a new forthcoming title called *BOP* which will hopefully come out quarterly with 58 pages in 8½ x 11 size and will present popular music themes written and drawn by a wide representation of overground and underground artists. They are currently seeking contributors.

Additionally, Denis intends to revive the *Death Rattle* series. The next one will feature a Corben cover and will include material from Metzger, Burns, and Dallas.

COMIX WORLD
Box 7081
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Clay Geerdes has recently released *Bad Girl Art* for $2 pp which features Brad Foster, Cliff Neal, Roldo, Larry Todd and others. They also have such mini's available for 50¢ and postage as: Tales from the Inside; Dance of Death #2; Two-Cysted Tales #2; Weird Johns; Two Titted Tales #3; Real Pubic Thrills; Interstellar Yuks; Low Grade #4; Insex; Babyfat #24 and Comix Wave 3-5 for $1.75 pp.

LAST GASP
2180 Bryant St.
San Francisco, Ca. 94110

For those of you into computer software, Ron Turner now has in stock an all-cartoon 24 page 11" x 14" book titled *CPU Wars* which retails for $2.95.

PUBLISHING

More Bode material may yet surface! Mark Bode is completing an unfinished Cheech Wizard story started by his late father, Vaughn. According to Mark, the story is a lot less harsh or adult-oriented than several of the earlier Cheech Wizard stories. So far, no particular publisher has spoken for the piece but a few seem genuinely interested, according to Mark.

Artie Romero, owner-editor of the long-dormant fanzine *Cascade,* devoted to undergrounds, assures us that the publication is not dead. The hiatus is due to financial snags and Artie's reluctance to "grapple with the grunt chores of printing" which he's always hated. At present, he is considering incorporating and selling shares in *Cascade* to raise enough revenue to kick it off again.

"I'm determined to overcome this hurdle and get *Cascade* up on its feet," says Artie. "The financial problems are real, but we're certainly not talking about a major fortune standing in the way. My intention is to have *Cascade* resurface in 1982."

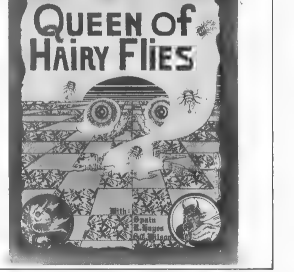
Pictured here is the cover to *Queen of Hairy Flies* independently published by Michael Roden (611 Garfield Ave. Milford, Ohio 95150) and contains 36 pages of u.g. art by Rory Hayes, Spain, S. Clay Wilson and a host of some of the best of the "newave" talent. Michael's dada-esque art adorns the cover in full cover He has also produced some smaller items recently such as *Oracle #2, City of Bone* and *Nightmare District* which has 18 pages and includes Wilson, Spain and Roden

Snafu #1 and #2 are out from Canada published by Free Kluck Productions, Box 2306, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 4A6 Canada for $1.75 pp. According to 'spokesfreak' Roldo, it's very much of a free-wheeling experimental collective. The Canadian artists have been jamming together for some time now.

Roldo states, "There is the possibility of a major U.S. underground artist joining us for issue #3 which is due in May. So far, we've completed the artwork up through #4 and we're still going strong." The print runs on Snafu's is a meager 300. They also have the *Winnipeg Jam Pac,* a set of six mini comix available for $2.50 & postage.

To bring readers up to date on a recent spate of independently published u.g.'s, here is a list of available titles. Often, they are put together with more enthusiasm than polish, but while they can lack the finished look of the professional publishers, they can occasionally deliver the drive and audacity of their earlier predecessors.

Soon to come out with u.g.'s featuring glossy stock covers, Pastime Publication, P.O. Box 19818, Portland, Oregon 97219 announced that they will soon have *Monday Funnies #7; Girls Galore #1;* and *Portland Underground Comix #2* available. *Guts #1* is $1 pp and *Mean Cat* is $1.50 pp from Lafler Publications, P.O. Box 982, Eugene, Ore; *Pure Sex #3* is $2 pp from Tom Brinkman, 4 Cranberry Dr., Islip, N.Y. 11751; *Tales Too Tough for T.V. #3* is $1.25 pp from Jamie Alder, 9970 Liberty Rd., Chelsea, Mi 48118; *Tales of the Steam Tunnels* is $1.75 pp from Tucker Petertil, 1302 N. Wilson, Olympia, Wa 98506. Leslie Caberga has illustrated "Crime and Puzzlement" by Lawrence Treat for Godiva.



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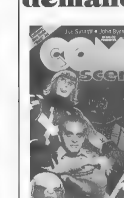

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John Beatty

For an up and coming artist, virtually unknown to the comic book industry, what could be more enticing or exciting than inking your favorite childhood superhero?

If you answered nothing, you're only half right.

For John Beatty, an artist from Holly Hill, Florida, the excitement is just half of it. Beatty, who enjoyed Captain America as a youngster, is currently inking the Marvel series which is being penciled by Mike Zeck.

Born in Whitesburg, Kentucky, the 20-year-old newcomer said his interests in drawing began when he was in grade school copying Charles Schultz's *Peanuts* and the *Dennis the Menace* comic strips.

However, once Beatty got into high school, by the age of 15 his interests shifted toward the more detailed drawings found in super hero magazines. Soon thereafter Beatty found himself subscribing to fan publications and it was through *Rockets Blast Comic Collector* that he initially met Zeck.

"I wrote a letter to James Van Heiss [the publisher at the time] and I said I was impressed by Mike's work," recalled Beatty. "He forwarded my letter to Mike and Mike wrote me back, sending Xeroxes of what he was doing. So, I started corresponding with Mike."

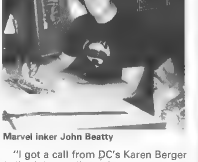
Today, Beatty attributes that Zeck, as well as Marvel inker Bob McLeod, were and still are his teachers.

"I started inking some of his [Zeck's] penciled xeroxes to see what it would be like," continued Beatty. "Then, two years ago, I met Bob McLeod and he began pushing me and teaching me about inking. Mike and Bob are basically my teachers. They are the ones that really helped me out a lot and they're the ones who critique my work all the time—to get better."

In July 1980, Beatty visited Zeck at his home in Connecticut and stayed there for one month. During his stay, Beatty decided to go to New York and present samples of his work to the people at Marvel and DC Comics. The next thing he knew, Beatty landed an inventory job with Marvel. But, as he said, it was "a little five page thing that still hasn't seen print and probably never will."

However, Beatty was then asked to do a piece for DC called "The Trouble With Air." Ironically, the story was penciled by Zeck. "It was supposed to be for their *Time Warp* magazine," commented Beatty, "But, since that's been cancelled, it's been shelved."

From there, Beatty said he began to do "little mystery jobs—some that have been printed, some that are just sitting up there." And it was from those "little mystery jobs" that Beatty was asked to do his first book.



Marvel inker John Beatty

"I got a call from DC's Karen Berger [editorial coordinator]," remembered Beatty, "and she wanted me to do the *Justice League* over George Perez. It was sort of strange. I got the call on a Friday and the coming Monday I had already planned to make a trip to New York. After that, I was offered *Captain America* at Marvel. So, I decided to take that."

Which brings us up to date. And for the time being, Beatty seems quite satisfied, claiming "I don't think there's anything else I'd rather be doing right now. As far as I'm concerned, Captain America has always been my favorite character and I enjoy doing it."

But what does the future hold for the Florida artist?

Although he would eventually like to get into pencilling, Beatty seems content, stating: "Right now inking is keeping me satisfied with what I'm doing." But, Beatty concedes that *Captain America* keeps him busy, since he is new to the game and rather "slow."

However, looking optimistically at the future, while being as realistic as possible, Beatty said, "speed will come further down the line. I still think since I'm new in the business, I'll have to build a reputation before I'm offered anything—as far as any new projects or anything."

—Howard T. Brody

Dressing Up

By HOWARD CRUSE

Why do I draw it *this way?* Why don't I draw it *another* way?

If the image that's perking in my brain could be beamed into the brains of Jack Kirby or Johnny Hart, what would *their* drawings of *my* picture look like?

They certainly wouldn't look like Howard Cruse had drawn them.

If we like, we cartoonists can play psychiatrist with ourselves about our drawing styles, sifting through today's shapes and shadings for touches that remind us of our creative infancy. Subtly they will always be with us, those days when our scribbles were pure play and everything professional or polished in our art had yet to be acquired.

This column is going to be a little bull session with myself about how drawing styles take root. In true bull-session tradition, I'll generalize recklessly, and tomorrow you can write me with your rejoinders. But for the moment I've got the floor, so pretend it's late at night and we're sprawled with empty beer cans (or chocolate Yoohoo bottles, for you underagers) generously scattered at our feet. If I wax too theoretical for your taste, you can mumble something about the bathroom and excuse yourself.

You see, I've just flashed on how it felt when I was a small kid and I used to play in my parents' bedroom, trying on Daddy's shoes. I happen to know I wasn't the only kid to do this, because I have spies. I'd clomp awkwardly about the house in these oversized shoes, pretending nonchalance and feeling disappointment if I failed to draw the attention of everyone on my clomping route.

I'm recalling my dress-up game because it makes a handy metaphor for the way we begin our artistic lives by "trying on" drawing styles. Young cartoonists who sneak swipes from Will Eisner may bristle at the suggestion that their efforts usually look as wobbly as I did in my father's footwear, but there's definitely a similarity of effect.

Which is not to deny that true artistic promise can still be on display.

In my first published comic strip, drawn for an Alabama weekly when I was 13, I assembled my characters' heads out of spare circles from *Little Lulu*. I raided Crockett Johnson's *Barnaby* for proportions, composition and whimsey in my first try at a daily strip, and later ransacked *Peanuts* for the curve of its lines and the weight of its figures. I copied everyone from Chester Gould to Dr. Seuss during those years. I was rummaging through the grown-up shoes, stepping out, showing off, rehearsing for a time when I would be more than just a kid with a knack for drawing.

Now I'm going to interject some Thoughts About Life. (The bathroom is the second door down the hall; by the time you're back I'll have brought it all back to drawing.)

One might say that the rehearsing for life never ends. We just grow into our roles. We grown-ups continue to dress up in Daddy's or Mommy's shoes. Except that we buy them ourselves, buy them to fit our grown-up feet, select them to harmonize with our perception of who we are and what image we wish to project.

Our clothing is never the same as the self inside the clothing. The self inside is the naked one, the fearful, hungry baby grown to adulthood, having absorbed a thousand lessons about what parts of itself may be shown and what parts must—because of this or that social rule—be hidden.

And within that clothing of flesh is an even more naked child: the innermost self, the soul. This one too ventures forth in "Daddy's or Mommy's shoes," except that now it wears Daddy's or Mommy's body, shielded by Daddy's or Mommy's clothing and living by (or rejecting, but inevitably shaped by) Daddy's or Mommy's rules.

If we could know each other's souls, we'd probably find ourselves more alike than different. But gifted in so many layers and styles of protection, we feel divided. This guy affects the strut of a bully as his survival tactic; another does better as The Comedian, or as The Sincere Fellow who hopes he's too nice to get punched. This girl shades down the street as Ms. Punk from Mars; another will polish her Scarlett O'Hara routine until she's 90.

And that's just speaking psychologically. Look at these bodies we've got wrapped around our delicate souls: fat ones, trim ones, lanky and squat ones. Apply clothing and diversity *really* flowers! There's tough Mr. Marine, Earth Mother Jane, efficient Ms. Executive, slick Mr. Stud.

In cartooning, our drawing styles are the clothing in which we artists dress our imagery. Sexy, serious, goofy, heroic—our drawings' personalities are projected not by the width of a tie or the cut of a gown, but by the texture of ink lines (the texture following from our choices of tools: brushes, crowquills, markers, toothpicks, whatever) and the manner in which these lines are combined, balanced and shaded.

We should never forget that the stylistic wrappings are not the same as the naked soul of the art. As with human beings, that soul is usually hidden from the eye. As with human beings, the wrappings can be phoney poses or honest expressions of what is within

The style of a drawing, like the clothing of a stranger entering a room,

Mr. Cruse has been given a free hand to express his thoughts and ideas in any manner he wishes within the scope of this publication. This column does not necessarily represent the editorial views of COMICS SCENE nor our philosophy. The contents is © 1982 by Howard Cruse

broadcasts an instant message that attracts, repels, or bores. What makes a drawing distinctive? There's no single standard; readers come with a dizzying variety of tastes. The anarchic works of S. Clay Wilson and the nuzzly *Love Is . . .* syndicated panel both have their legions of enthusiasts.

Should creators "dress" their art for targeted audiences, or should they dress it to please themselves and let the chips fall where they may? Should they "sell out" to mass tastes? Should their work go unread because to the eyes of anyone but friends it looks amateurish or ugly?

You tell me!

When I was greener, the sage advice in how-to-cartoon texts was usually: "Don't worry about creating a 'style.' If you keep drawing, your style will find *you!*"

Apt advice, but incomplete. There's no need to seize onto artificial eye-catching devices that make drawings labored and self-conscious. Relax! Do enough drawings and do them as effectively as you can, and your work in time will bear your individual stamp. It's as inevitable as the personalized signature that evolves from the grammar school script with which we all begin.

Still, I have to propose this amendment: Relax, but *don't forget to monitor the changes as they evolve.* Signatures that mutate into illegible scrawls may be personalized, but may also make communication hopeless.

Changes happen because we experiment. When a catchy new graphic flourish strikes our fancy, we tend to repeat it. And sometimes we do so for dumb, self-defeating reasons.

When we *think* about what we see happening in our drawings as the years pass, our intellect has a chance to influence what begins as a random process. If we're wise, we avoid artificial tricks. Instead we edit or reject graphic tangents that may be trendy but which undercut our authenticity.

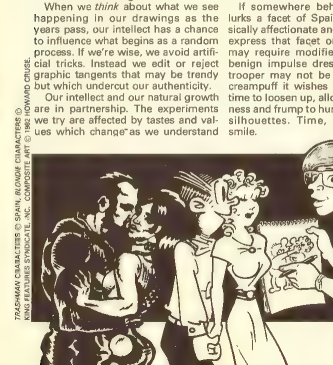
Our intellect and our natural growth are in partnership. The experiments we try are affected by tastes and values which change as we understand more who we are. A sober philosopher will gravitate toward a different range of graphic options than a clown. Someone like Richard Corben, who makes most of his statement visually, creates from a different point of view than a Cathy Guisewite, whose heart is in the *verbal* component of the comic strip mix.

Earlier, right after my sixteenth Yoohoo when I was talking about souls inside naked bodies inside clothing, I was talking about the essence of art, which has to do with revealing hidden things, and with conjuring fantasies which tell of things too intense or frightening to face squarely, naked and to naked soul. How to seize our essential feelings and dramatize them in styles that mold honestly to their emotional reality can be a lifetime's quest. The quest requires both *thought* and respect for our *instincts.*

Eventually experiments will provide a repertory of stylistic riffs that clothe an artist's ideas so organically that one cannot imagine his or her visions depicted in any other way.

Draw a Spain Rodriguez *Trashman* strip in the style of *Blondie* and you will send a very altered emotional signal to your readers. It's no accident that Spain finds angry shadows in faces that Chic Young would have decorated with pug noses. It's by design that Spain's cross-hatching seems piped like carbon-monoxide into cityscapes alternately drained of life, then teeming with hostile populations in perpetual heat. This isn't the Bumsteads' suburbia, and Spain doesn't want you feeling cozy. His drawing style makes that clear before the first word is read.

If somewhere behind his glower lurks a facet of Spain that is whimsically affectionate and he is moved to express that facet on paper, his art may require modified costuming. A benign impulse dressed as a storm trooper may not be spotted for the creampuff it wishes to be. It will be time to loosen up, allow some playfulness and frump to humanize the harsh silhouettes. Time, stylistically, to smile.



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Whether Spain ever wishes to express such a facet (or already has, unbeknownst to me) is beside the point. There is no reason to ask him to, any more than we ask the denizens of *Miss Peach's* classroom to don artillery belts and try to liberate El Salvadore. Neither Spain nor Mell Lazarus are in their creative infancies; they do not draw as they do because they are "trying on Daddy's shoes." Their experience has taught them the graphic wardrobes that best suit what they want to say.

Many a budding artist, though, will follow in their paths, trying on the shoes of Lazarus this month, of Rodriguez the next, and of another artistic "parent" the next. Note will be taken, consciously or unconsciously: the wide, tarry lines of a Ron Cobb carry the weight of outrage more naturally than the theatrical finesse of an Al Hirschfeld. A sense of the ludicrous may call for the exaggerations of a Don Martin rather than the realism of a Neal Adams.

And so on. A style is synthesized that reflects each artist's inner world. Once style and content click together to provide income and applause, quite a few cartoonists seem to lose interest in stretching themselves creatively. Happily, there are others who persist in surprising us.

Robert Crumb's history is laced with such surprises. The Rapidographed playfulness of *Fritz the Cat* made way for the bulbous insanity of the *Zaps.* Crumb has satirized "clean" comics with squeaky-cheeked prurience, or has draped his characters in a cross-hatched grunginess that hovers like B.O. over the page. He's explored every tone and format from Lenore Goldberg's commando confrontations to *Cubist Be-Bop.* Crumb can wear many shoes by now, but he's grown into them; they're his and they all fit. He's not clomping in whatever footwear Daddy happens to have provided.

We all have to start out with some clomping, though; Crumb did, too. We start out choosing lines and shapes haphazardly, working with tools that may or may not be the most appropriate. Trying this style and that, we watch things work and we watch things fail.

Gradually, we grow at ease with ourselves. The details of it all take less thought as we move and dress our bodies and our drawings to tell others who we are, or who we would like them to think we are.

And thus we present ourselves: toddlers no more. Our shoes fit. Our garb is snappy. Heads turn: we have taken charge and learned how to gain the world's attention.

The next question is: do we have anything to say? ■

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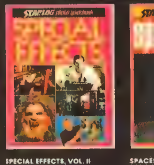

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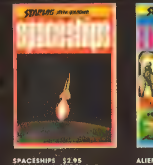

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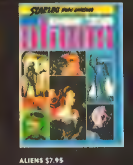

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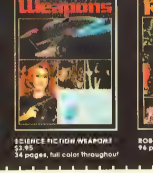

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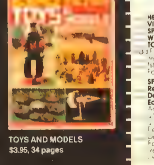

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The First 50 Years

By LENNY KAYE

We are walking down the dimly lit corridors of the Detective's Hall of Fame. Sherlock Holmes puffs on his pipe, takes a snort, and watches us craftily as we go by; Charlie Chan places his fingers in a steeple and nods formally. Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe are off in a corner by the bar, trading underworld connections, while Shell Scott and Michael Shayne attempt to drive each other under a table. Mike Hammer looks on in amusement. Nero Wolfe and Hercule Poirot share a meal, with a place setting reserved for Philo Vance when he returns from the Stuyvesant Club. Nick Charles makes eyes at the curvaceous Honey West; Nora does a slow burn. Perry Mason works on a legal brief, seemingly oblivious to the hubbub surrounding him.

Suddenly the doors slide open. A figure is seen in silhouette. There is no need for further clues. A snap-brim hat, a right-angled nose surrounded by a square-jawed face. Could there be any other?

Of all the legendary detectives, Dick Tracy is the only one to come out of the daily grind of the newspaper comic strips. Placing his mark on the collective imagination of our time, he recently celebrated his fiftieth anniversary (the first *Tracy* Sunday strip debuted October 4, 1931, with the daily following eight days later on October 12). This golden milestone caused the kind of media ripples usu-

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Not only was Tracy popular in the newspapers, he was seen all over the place. In the thirties and forties he appeared in comic book tales, juvenile novels, big little books, a radio program, serials, and more. As time wore on, Tracy's appearances outside the strip diminished a bit but his comic book stories continued to appear and when he made his first animated appearance, a board game followed (left). Gould or an assistant frequently did work on these other items because who else could capture the unique style of Tracy and his cohorts?

ALL ART © TRIBUNE SYNDICATE CO

ally associated with national landmarks: a story in *Time,* interviews and remembrances in print and over the airwaves, plus an opportunity to reserve just how far the strip has come since its earliest years.

Not bad for something as eminently disposable as yesterday's papers. Yet Tracy, working through the medium of his creator, Chester Gould, utilized the limitations that might conceivably lie in planting the seed of life within three or four daily panels to his advantage, creating a narrative flow that not only revolutionized the concept of what an adventure comic strip might aspire to be, but through his visual expressionism, crossed the boundaries between "cartoon" and realistic art, blurring them forever.

Tracy and Gould were part of the great popular-culture upheaval that began in the 1920s, in which folk art (i.e. jazz and hillbilly music, films of varying melodramatic degrees, including animation) slowly began transforming itself into a superb vehicle for people's hopes and fears, the mark of true art, and one particularly suited to an age of mass communication.

No longer was entertainment and enlightenment reserved as a privilege of the privileged. Now it could be found in your local record shop, over the radio, in a back pocket in the form of a paperback, each night at the movies; later, television would unite millions of homes in its shared consciousness.

And then there were the newspapers, perhaps the true mirrors of any age, imparting the most basic information needed for survival, the journalist's code of Who, What, Where, When, How, and Why? Just the facts, ma'am. . . .

Prior to *Tracy,* newspaper comic strips were mostly of the amusement variety, ranging from outright fantasy *(The Yellow Kid)* and outlandish characters *(The Katzenjammer Kids,* or Gould's favorite, *Mutt & Jeff)* to out-and-out science fiction *(Buck Rogers).* Even *Little Orphan Annie* with its plain, unadorned backgrounds, seemed to take place in a never-never land somehow removed from daily life.

But there was no question where Dick Tracy existed. His beat was the streets, an unprettified urban landscape which often rose up to take vengeance on the unsuspecting. Gould's characters, especially his villains, might have been broad caricatures, but like political cartoons, their farcical aspects only heightened the reality of their own situation. Helping to suspend disbelief was the strip's forward thrust, an often frighteningly real narrative pace keyed to a documentary rhythm, making even the most jawdropping of events seem plausible.

It could not have happened in the movies, where the grotesqueries might seem unnatural, a cops-and-robbers story turned into a veritable horror tale; or even novels, where the use of language could render sensational Gould's delight in the outlandish. It could not have even happened in comic books, with the set length of stories hindering Chet's delight in endlessly improvising on a plot-line, creating chases within chases, climaxes upon climaxes.

Dick Tracy could only have been a product of the comic strips, and therein lies his glory.

PHOTO COURTESY SAM GROSS

Creator Chester Gould in 1977.

The Creation of Tracy

Born November 20, 1900, Chester Gould began drawing at the age of seven after being encouraged by his father, a newspaper printer in the family's hometown of Pawnee, Oklahoma. He took a correspondence course in cartooning when he was fifteen, and later graduated to Oklahoma A&M, where he passed two restless years sketching for the school paper. By 1921, he had moved to Chicago with the hopes of landing his own comic strip job, something that was 10 years away.

Finding a job on the Chicago *American,* Gould bombarded the local newspaper syndicates with ideas for features. In particular, he focused his proposals toward Captain Joseph Medill Patterson of the Chicago Tribune-New York News, trying at various times to sell take-offs on Ripley's *Believe It Or Not* (a science-oriented strip called *The World's Notebook),* a dramatic children's oriented strip with a girl named Sal, and a couple of funnier, more broadly ribald sequences. None had the breadth of originality that Patterson was looking for, and Chet served his apprenticeship on movie-oriented strips like *Fillum Fables* and advertising art.

In 1931, Gould decided to move his head from the clouds and work from real-life. Having lived through Chicago in the midst of prohibition, a violent period of history that now comes down to us in the folklore of Al Capone and the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, he was well-suited to convey an atmosphere of disorder in which rival gangs battled to control the lucrative business of organized crime. The police and courts seemed handcuffed; the public longed for some symbol of law enforcement, "the modern equivalent of a knight in shining armor on his white stallion," as Gould would explain later. "The country didn't need a detective to sit in an armchair and theorize . . . it needed someone as tough as the gangsters were."

With Plainclothes Tracy, re-named "Dick" by Patterson after the jargon of the day (would he be called "Fuzzy Tracy" today?), Gould created a classic good versus evil situation, the black and whites of which stood in stark contrast to the mottled greys which often frustrate the human need for solving life's problems. The detective tale, at least until its recent revisionism, offered a chance at The Solution, a hope that, just as crime might be eradicated, so might life's personal crimes—those turns of fate which require patient analysis coupled with violent bursts of energy to overcome.

Patterson accepted *Tracy* as a strip when he mailed Gould the following telegram on Aug. 13, 1931: "Your Plainclothes Tracy has possibilities stop would like to see you when I go to Chicago next stop please call (Chicago) Tribune office Monday about noon for an appointment." Gould, like his detective, had pulled no punches in the six trial strips he'd submitted to Patterson: information was tortured out of a young Lothario, guns were quickly drawn by cigarette-smoking hoodlums, a moll named Texie Garcia (after Texas Guinan) was lightly clad in a silk dressing gown while an evil-doer named Cleaver threatened her. In the final panel, Tracy stood at a door, gun in hand, waiting to break in on Cleaver and a trapped Texie. It's no wonder Patterson took the bait. He probably wanted to see how the story turned out!

On October 4, a Sunday, the first *Tracy* strip appeared in the Detroit *Mirror.* When the New York *News* took it on October 13, a future for the hard-nosed detective was assured.

The initial episode opened with Tracy popping the question to his sweetheart, Tess Trueheart—"Darling, I've got something darned important I want to tell you tonight"—a proposal interrupted by a holdup in which Tess' father dies. Dick joins the police force hoping to find the killer. Appointed by

HAF-AND-HAF'S GOT A JOB AT THE ZOO..?
NOT A BAD PLACE FOR HIM.
PAROLE BOARD CAN'T RELEASE A PRISONER UNLESS A JOB OUTSIDE'S BEEN ARRANGED. BUT WHY THE CITY ZOO?
I CAN ANSWER THAT, CHIEF... AND I CAN ALSO TELL YOU WHY IT'S A MISTAKE.
ALAN COLLINS

Here's how Tracy and the gang look today, under the skillful art of Rick Fletcher and the imagination of Max Allan Collins.

then-Chief Brandon, he meets his sidekick (and later Chief) Pat Patton, and before the year is out, begins a run-in with a newly drawn Texie, now accompanied by a solid Capone-ish gang leader named Big Boy. Tracy was on his way, and Gould was ready.

The strip matured rapidly. Gould's drawing style quickly began to develop, increasing his characters' range of emotion, taking on depth and perspective, while his facility at storytelling continued to grow. However, Tracy's acutely-chiseled jaw remained a constant. In 1932, the street-kid Junior was introduced, possibly to attract a younger readership into Tracy's adult world. A parade of villains followed, each more ghastly than the next: the Fagin-like Steve the Tramp, the mad Doc Hump, the sinister siblings Boris and Zora Arson. By the mid-thirties, Tracy had attained mass popularity, and millions of newspaper readers were caught up breathlessly in his daily and Sunday adventures.

Those Fabulous Villains

To speak of Tracy is to speak of his villains, for as an unswerving harbinger of Good, he had a need to face down Evil in all its most perverse forms. Gould would often say that he made his villains ugly because crime itself is ugly, but his characterizations went beyond normal standards of judging beauty to the downright inhuman. Perhaps this otherness allowed those arch criminals to do their dastardly deeds in a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. Gould would invent these grotesques on the train, riding from his home in Woodstock, Illinois, to his Chicago studio, sketching fellow passengers and exaggerating their features. Sometimes his ideas evolved from the newspapers. Flattop (1943-44), perhaps Tracy's most famous nemesis, received his name from World War II slang for an aircraft carrier.

It was Gould's subtle touches of characterization that made his villains come alive. Empty Williams (1951—so called because a head injury scooped a chunk out of his skill) has a peculiar personality tic of introducing each phrase with "As a matter a' fact"; the fleshy Oodles (1955) has a mania about losing weight; Sleet (1949) is a chill and icy beauty. While early parts might be filled from the movies (Jimmy White, from 1933, is a ringer for James Cagney), as Gould's confidence grew, his creations grew more bizarre. The underworld's penchant for nicknames might have sparked his interest in these odd societal misfits, but by taking them literally, Gould created a whole new species of villain. A sense of humor helped. The aptly-named Shaky (1944) calls out to one of his cohorts, "Tell 'm I'll be there in a minute—just as soon as I sew this button on my coat."

Since the criminal side was so colorful, it wouldn't do to have Tracy and his assortment of sub-characters remain straight and uninteresting. Thus was born B.O. Plenty in 1945 (he of the tobacco-spitting and "yshaw") and Gravel Gertie in 1944—both, incidentally, introduced as villains—the irrascible Vitamin Flintheart (1944), and, perhaps his most appealing creation, Sparkle Plenty, in 1947. She was a little tyke who played ukelele with such adorability that one Christmas three million doll replicas of herself were sold. The police department included such stalwarts as Tracy's partner, Sam Ketchum, and the policewoman, Lizz. Nor was Tracy's immediate family neglected. He finally married Tess Trueheart on Christmas day of 1949, a union graced by Bonnie Braids in 1951.

As the strip grew, so did Gould's facility with his art. By the beginning of Tracy's golden age—generally regarded to be most of the 40s and early 50s—his sense of pace was such that his tales pyramided extravagantly, twisting and turning and featuring escapes and intricate dangers. Painstaking and realistic police procedure would be detailed (Gould's advisor on this was A.A. Valanis, a retired officer and former police artist, and he supplemented his education by taking courses in criminology at Northwestern), traps would be set, startling deaths devised.

The Sphinx (1951) was tied to a platform at the bottom of an elevator shaft while the elevator was slowly and crunchingly lowered; the Brow (1944) was impaled on a flag-pole; Prune Face (1943) was frozen to death. Tracy himself survived being shot numerous times, having his house blown up, departmental corruption charges, and in one memorable sequence, the en-

Tracy's first appearance in August, 1931.

LISTEN - YOU DIDN'T FIRE THOSE SHOTS THROUGH THAT DOOR THAT GOT PAT - THOSE SHOTS WERE INTENDED FOR ME AND WERE FIRED BY BIG BOY - WHERE'S HE HIDING?
I AM THE ONLY ONE HERE.

Late that year the distinct look began.

trapment by Mrs. Prune Face under a sp ke supported only by a block of melting ice.

If the 40s for Dick Tracy were characterized by extremely powerful story lines, it was toward the 50s that Gould began experimenting with his drawing. He had always used solid masses of black to convey a sense of shadowed menace, but now his art also suggested tension and contrast, sometimes abruptly shifting scenes to make an impact, at other times static and repetitive, looking at a moment from slightly different angles. A picture may often be a thousand words, but in the four panels Gould alloted most of his daily strips, he not only had to create a beginning and an end, but provide continuity as well.

The Sunday strips, regarded as entities unto themselves, could be more impressionistic, and Gould often used the increased space to present mini-dramas of action or reflection. He usually shrugged off his advances as an illustrator as just natural growth, but for a strip known primarily for the quality of its adventure, it is sometimes a revelation to look at the graphic attention Gould paid to his over-all layout, the pure abstract harmony that shines through his best work.

By the 1950s, Gould's pace had evened out. It would have been foolish for him to attempt to top the infamy of his 40s' villains, yet such characters as Tonsils (1952) and Open Mind Monty (1954) are still ruthlessly vivid. Perhaps the most nerve-tightening sequence of the decade took place in 1956, when the juvenile delinquent Joe Period teamed up with Flattop Jr. in an epic spree of hit-and-run suspense. The image of Flattop running down a street with the ghost of Skinny, the girl he's just killed, hanging on his neck, is a classic sequence underlining the retributions of guilt, the unrealized fruits of crime.

WHEN YOU FELT YOURSELF BEING PUSHED, DID YOU NOTICE ANY MOVEMENT AT THE BACK OF YOUR HEAD AS THOUGH BLAKE WERE HIDING THIS GUN IN YOUR HAIR...
I COULDN'T SWEAR TO IT.. I... I WAS TOO STUNNED... EVERYTHING WENT BLACK..
YES, CHIEF - I'M AT THE BANK NOW. MARK MASTERS, THE BANK TELLER, HAS BEEN QUITE THOROUGHLY RUBBED OUT!
BLOWN TO BITS - BY A BOMB!
Tracy's look didn't change much between 1935 and the mid-fifties.

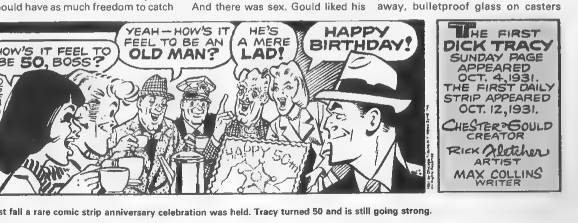
Tracy and Society

Gould's position on law and order was firm. He believed that the police should have as much freedom to catch a criminal as does the criminal to commit crime, and through his *Crime-stopper's Textbook* (where he gave tips on safety and watchfulness) and Tracy's infrequent moralizing on the powers of the police, he made no bones about driving the point home. If this stance caused him some unpopularity, especially in the later 60s, it also helped Tracy's image. After all, Dick would never take unfair advantage of a suspect, would he?

Indeed, as moral as Tracy was supposed to be, the script as written by Gould could certainly not be rated "family" entertainment. Shoot-outs, inflicted beatings, stabbings and gangland executions (in one attempted burial at sea, the victim was tied between two girders, a scenario interrupted by a pistol-wielding Tracy in full trigger) hallmarked the strip, and this doesn't include the stranger forms of intended death fabricated by Gould. He conceived of his police-and-thieves saga as a war, a conflict that followed its own internal rules: the *Apocalypse Now* of a helicopter shootout with Crewy Lou (1951) in a lookout's tower; little Bonnie Braids lying kidnapped and abandoned in a wrecked car down the mountainside.

And there was sex. Gould liked his lovelies well-cinched and he lavished much affection on them, tightening their busts and shortening their hems wherever possible. Even in the teargas-filled watchtower which appears to trap Chewy Lou, her skirt remains tight and the v-neck of her blouse reaches an unfailing halfway. When she falls 65 feet to the rocks below, one high heel shoe stands upright next to her, as if to mark the site of her passing. Women in Gould's strips always maintained an air of sensuality, whether through innocence (the early 1935 Toby Townley, framed and sent to prison), experience (the policewoman Lizz, who maintained professional cool while in mini-skirts), glamor (singer Dot View, Lizz's sister, in a 1952 nightclub thriller), and, by the 60s, otherworldliness (Moonmaid—the perfect outer space nymphette).

Gould was also stimulated by technology, asserting he made practical, laboratory side that, just as necessary as sex and violence, was needed to provide Tracy with an air of balance. His strip featured such inventions as the two-way wrist radio (and later television), devices that could register phone numbers dialed several feet away, bulletproof glass on casters


HOW'S IT FEEL TO BE 50, BOSS?
YEAH — HOW'S IT FEEL TO BE AN OLD MAN?
HE'S A MERE LAD!
HAPPY BIRTHDAY!
THE FIRST DICK TRACY SUNDAY PAGE APPEARED OCT. 4, 1931. THE FIRST DAILY STRIP APPEARED OCT. 12, 1931.
CHESTER GOULD CREATOR
RICK FLETCHER ARTIST
MAX COLLINS WRITER
Last fall a rare comic strip anniversary celebration was held. Tracy turned 50 and is still going strong.

(used as a movable shield), and many other wonders of tomorrow. This quest for scientific utopianism, most of which was engineered by Tracy's good friend, millionaire Diet Smith, reached a high point in the sixties with the invention of the magnetic space coupe, landing on the moon, and the consequent discovery of its inhabitants.

This science fictional slant jarred the traditional gritty realism of Tracy, and evidenced the fact that Gould was, if not tiring of his creation, at least trying to approach him from new angles. Still, the wedding feast between Moonmaid and Junior (still hovering somewhere about age 19), with giant escargot from Moon Valley and toasts to the "first couple in history to honeymoon on the moon," has a certain charm.

By then, Tracy could afford to romp around space. An institution among strip artists, Gould was awarded the prestigious Reuben in 1959 for Cartoonist of the Year from the National Cartoonists Society, an indication that he had reached the pinnacle of his craft. Aside from the success of the strip, carried in over 700 newspapers and in several languages, he had watched countless spin-offs from his character, resulting in a flood of appearances in other mediums, including movies and television, not to mention a host of toys, games, books, and other ephemera that today make up a collector's dream.

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Breaking Out of the Funny Papers

To save the strip from the temporal nature of the newspaper pages, Dick Tracy moved quickly into the newly created material-seeking comic book industry. McKay reprinted the first strips in its *Feature Book* series in 1937, and Dell picked up the rights in 1939, where it reappeared often in its 4-color line. The strip was also part of *Super Comics*' line-up from 1938 to 1949.

The actual *Dick Tracy* comic, also consisting of strip reprints, was begun by Dell in January, 1949, and taken over by Harvey at issue #25 in March, 1950. Except for "new" stories in issues 19-24 of which Gould had no part, the first 18 issues reprise strips from 1934 to 1936, while the Harvey publications go straight from Flattop in 1943 to Tracy Jr. in 1956 with nary a break. The comics have been condensed to avoid repetition, of course, but reading the issues in continuum is perhaps even more satisfying than following the newspaper pages, because you get a sense of Gould's sweep of pursuit, the mounting excitement he builds in his strip. In the later issues, under the heat of the Comics Code, there was some expurgation, a gun disappearing from a mobster's hand or a particularly gory wound inked out, but not enough to disturb Gould's turn of the screw.

The movies were less kind to Gould's creation, perhaps because seeing the reality of his three-dimensional character was somehow disappointing after the imaginative room of the strip. There was a 1936 Republic serial starring Ralph Byrd, and Morgan Conway attempted to step into Dick's gumshoes in the RKO films of the 40s, but Tracy was destined not to become a star of the silver screen. A 1960's animated Tracy, which promised more success, was diverted to an intended younger audience and so failed to grasp the adult essentials of what made *Tracy* a great strip. There are plans for a new *Dick Tracy* movie to begin shooting next year, but hoped-for star Clint Eastwood (would you believe it?) has declined the offer, and director/writer John Landis' plans are still very much up in the air.

Tracy-endorsed products sold well as toys, so we must assume that Dick's "all-around all-age" appeal, as the Tribune syndicate blurbed, was correct. Along with many *Big Little Books*, as well as *Big Big Books*, he appeared on jigsaw puzzles, plastic cameras, tin pistols, badges, watches, a variety of games, and many giveaway premiums. One of the nicest Tracy collectibles is the set of 144 cards produced for Dick Tracy caramels by the Walter H. Johnson Candy Co. of Chicago in the late 30s, detailing some of the earliest adventures in both words and pictures.

Gould's influence ranged wide, helping to convert the adventure strip into an integral part of the newspaper comics section. In his wake, the funny page became a setting for action, and cliff-hanging a common ploy to boost reader appeal and circulation. *Kerry Drake*, under the guidance of Alfred Andriola began in October, 1943, to utilize a more realistic drawing style amidst a high level of intensity and character development (a fact recognized when Andriola won the Reuben for 1971); and perhaps us nonforget Fearless Fosdick, Al Capp's satirical takeoff on our pointy-jawed hero, shot through with so many holes he resembles a swiss cheese, one cartoonist's affectionate tribute to another.

In the 70s, settled on his spacious farm in Woodstock, Gould slowly turned over control of the strip to writer Max Collins and illustrator Richard Locke. Despite working as assistant to Gould for close to 16 years, the latter's style is markedly different from Gould, and by the time of the full switch-over in the later 70s, he had changed Tracy's visual flavor toward a heavier, more flamboyant life. Collins, as well, has a different sense of drama than Gould, but a well-published mystery buff ("Ms. Tree" in *Eclipse*, for example) should have no trouble integrating the essential elements of Dick's character. In 1978, Gould was once again presented with the Reuben, a singular honor.

Like any continuing soap opera, it's interesting to watch the placement of characters in today's Tracy. Junior's Moon Maid was killed in an auto explosion (the bomb was meant for Dick) and the Moon dwellers returned to their home in anger, severing relations with Earth. Tracy looks to remain in the realistic milieu with which it is most comfortable. Sparkle has similarly lost her husband, Vera Alldid, only this time through the prosaic legal maneuvers of divorce, and the Museum of Cartoon Art speculates that "the path is . . . open for romance between Junior and Sparkle."

As for Tracy, he celebrated the birth of his second child, Joseph Flintheart Tracy, in 1979, and in 1981, came upon his fiftieth birthday. But even as he was being toasted with coffee cups at police headquarters, a strangely malevolent figure swathed in bandages was ominously shuddering over Dick's front-page picture in the last panel of the strip.

Again, the beginning. ■

Don Bluth

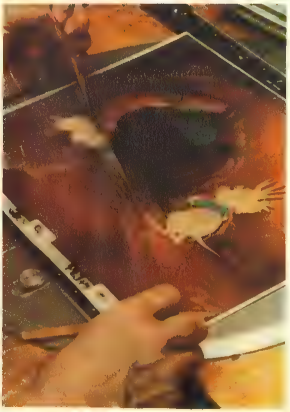
Meet the man and the studio that may change the direction of today's animated movies.

By DAVID HUTCHISON

In the fall of 1979, Don Bluth, Gary Goldman and John Pomeroy made Hollywood headlines by leading a group of animators in a mass resignation from the animation department of the Walt Disney Studios. It was said that a dispute over training practices and artistic control motivated their departure in the midst of the studio's production of *The Fox and the Hound*, a move which resulted in a six month delay in the release of Disney's film.

Nineteen people left Disney over a period of months to join Don Bluth, form the core nucleus of a new animation studio. At first was Don Bluth doing that attracted so many Disney artists to him?

It began in 1972. Working nights and weekends, Don Bluth and Disney associate Gary Goldman (John Pomeroy joined the group in 1973) labored in the garage of Bluth's Culver City home trying to rediscover the techniques of

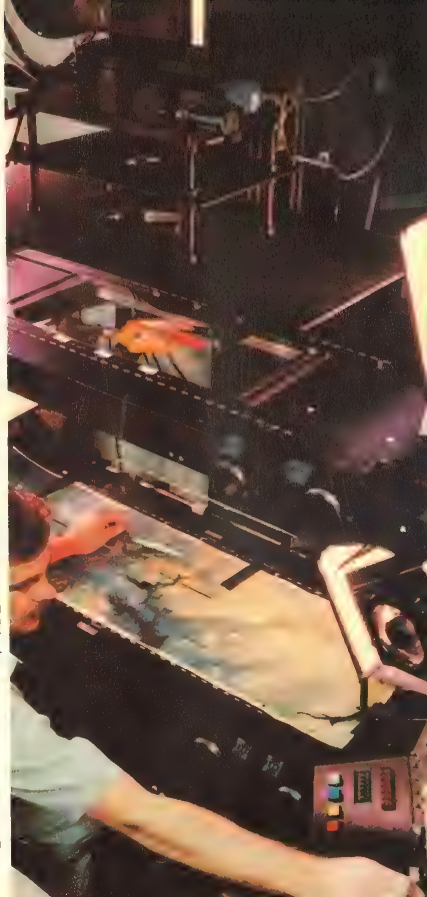


classical animation that had been practiced by the Disney artists during the 30s and 40s—a period that has become known as animation's Golden Age. Sadly, many of these techniques and special effects have slipped into obscurity through long disuse.

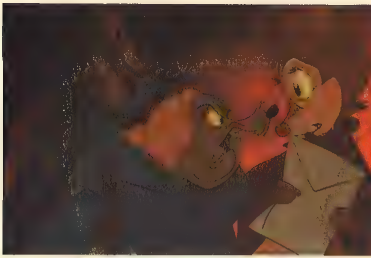
The original group of three grew to 12, dropping by the garage whenever they could, frequently staying until all hours of the night, sometimes curling up on their desks to catch a little sleep. They pooled their resources—time, talent and money—to purchase the necessary tools, equipment and materials to create their own short film. In 1977, Mel Griffin joined the three creative principals to, in the words of Don Bluth, "handle those things that artists don't seem to understand."

Working as they did, it took Don Bluth and his team of Disney moonlighters five years to complete their first 30-minute short, *Banjo, the Woodpile Cat.* Because of their success with *Banjo,* a group of investors decided to gamble a few million dollars and back the fledgling animation studio on a feature. Bluth believes that five years of hard work on *Banjo* earned his group the right to try a feature. "We will earn the right to stay in business," believes Bluth. "If we don't do it right, then we can't claim the right to stay in business. If *The Secret of NIMH* succeeds then there will be another film. But even if we fail, that won't keep us from trying again or loving what we do. Animation is a beautiful art form that is in danger of dying out. Animated film today has to be a thoroughbred to compete for big box office dollars to really survive. Every time someone produces an animated feature that fails, the whole animation industry dies a little bit more."

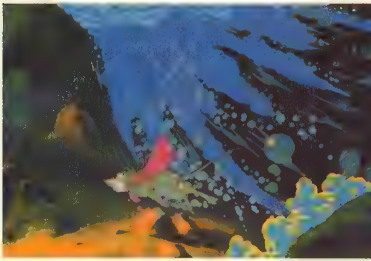
Finally, when working in Don Bluth's garage became more personally rewarding than the Disney studio, a decision was made. On Thursday, September 13, 1979, Bluth, Goldman and Pomeroy tendered their resignations to Disney Productions and a new animation studio was born.



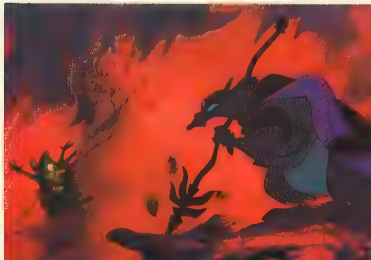
Left page: (clockwise from top left) 1. Mrs. Brisby is placed against a finished background and compared with color chips to determine which lighting effect is desired for this scene. 2. Debbie Siegel mixes colors from a palette of 600 colors of vinyl-based paint used for *NIMH.* 3. Before being photographed each painted cel is placed over the background for final checking of color smoothness and animation accuracy. 4. Surrounded by brilliant backgrounds, artist Ron Dias paints yet another. Right page: Charles Warren operates a multiplane camera which gives a sense of solidity to animated films. The camera is at the top aimed toward the floor, in the middle is a painted character cel and below is a painted background. Multiplane shots like this and multiple passes of the film through the camera add depth and richness to films animated in the "classical" tradition.



Crusty Auntie Shrew wants Mrs. Brisby that her family must move.



Mrs. Brisby swims free of a waterfall's undertow.



Centurious rat Brutus shows no sympathy for Mrs. Brisby.

Upon completion of *Banjo the Woodpile Cat,* Don Bluth Productions moved from the garage into new Studio City offices and formed an exclusive association with Aurora Productions, a company formed in 1978 by Rich Irvine and James L. Stewart, two other former Disney executives.

After animating a two-minute sequence for Universal's *Xanadu,* the studio began to devote all of its energies toward completing its first feature film, *The Secret of NIMH.* Based on the Newberry award-winning children's classic by Robert C. O'Brien, *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH,* the film will be released in July by United Artists.

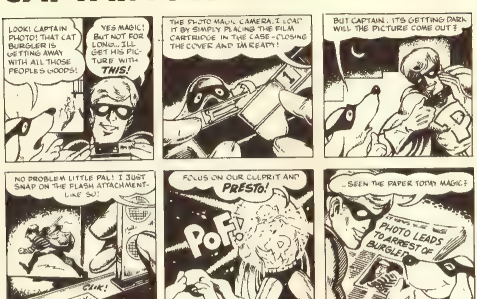
Don Bluth Productions is housed in a small two-story commercial building just off Ventura Blvd. in Studio City. Approximately 55 artists, animators, cameramen, background artists, technicians, color stylists and office workers work here doing what they love most in life. Small and unimpressive from the outside, the studio looks like nothing at all extraordinary on the inside. Yet 19 people left Disney to work here and more stand on line with portfolios in hand waiting to be given the chance. Why?

The building itself certainly evokes none of the aura of magic that the Disney studio seems to possess. Within the comparatively tiny space of the studio itself, animators and artists crammed into tiny offices work back to back and elbow to elbow, even spilling out into the hallways and stairwells. Why would anyone leave the comfortable Disney studios to work here?

Only after meeting and talking first with some of Don Bluth's co-workers and then with Don Bluth himself do I begin to understand. At first the tour of the studio begins routinely enough, visiting camera departments, background, layout, special effects, etc. I am allowed to interrupt people at work, ask questions about what they are doing and why. Nothing seems out of the ordinary or different from any of a number of animation houses around town. I begin to realize that it's not so much precisely *what* the artists are doing that makes the difference, but *how* they are allowed or even encouraged to do it. I am impressed not so much with the actual answers to my questions about how things are done at the Bluth studio, but with *how* the questions are answered. After several hours it slowly dawns on me, that every person here loves intensely what he or she is doing, and would rather be here at Don Bluth's studio than any other place they can think of.

I am told, as I move from department to department, that it is not uncommon for some people to work here 75, 80 or even 100 hours a week. Often people have to reminded to go

A CAMERA KIT FROM CAPTAIN PHOTO!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BUT CAPTAIN, IT'S GETTING DARK. WILL THE PICTURE COME OUT?
NO PROBLEM LITTLE PAL! I JUST SNAP ON THE FLASH ATTACHMENT—LIKE SO!
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home . . . once in a while. Directing animator Gary Goldman has a wife and kids, so he tries to spend Sundays with his family. But as I listen to the excitement in his voice as he talks about his work, I wonder who would win if he had to choose between his family and his craft.

"When I tell my wife I will be home on Sunday," begins Goldman, "she looks me in the eye and asks, 'Are you sure?' In 1975 we started on *Banjo the Woodpile Cat,* which we spent five years of evenings and weekends working on in Bluth's garage in addition to working full time at Disney. It really got tight then. I remember my youngest son's first words to me were, 'Bye-by, Daddy' and 'Don Blooo.' "

The studio uses two multi-plane cameras in addition to standard animation camera stands to assist in producing the "classical animation style" for which the studio is trying to become known. Goldman, I am told confidentially by one of the other artists, can literally be found working in almost any given department at the studio.

Goldman begins with the camera: "Basically our animation is done on 'twos'—one drawing for each two frames of film—unless the camera is moving. If the camera moves at all, you have to go to one drawing per frame or else the action strobes on the screen.

"So, suppose the camera is moving. You have two or three characters working all on separate levels of cels, then four levels of special effects cels—drop shadows, reflections, etc.—that's six or seven levels of drawings to be placed and moved for each frame of film. Plus maybe three more levels of drawings that are shot on a second pass, such as snow or smoke. These effects have to be burned in with a separate exposure over a black background.

"Since all of our effects are done "in-camera" on the original film, several passes are required. For example we may shoot a scene at 60 percent of the correct exposure with the smoke cels over the character and background. Then the camera is backed up and the characters and background are shot at 40 percent of the correct exposure without the smoke effect cels. The result is that the characters and background are in there at 100 percent, but the smoke is at 60 percent, so it looks more believable.

"Or we might shoot the scene at 100 percent exposure, back the camera up, put a diffusion lens on the camera and shoot the smoke cels at 40 percent over a black background. Then the smoke takes on a very soft, wispy, diffused effect.

"We use the multiplane camera to give our scenes a very solid look—there is a background, a middleground and sometimes an out-of-focus foreground. On the average, a *NIMH* scene requires three to five passes through the camera, but there are some sequences which require much more than that."

Don Bluth, Gary Goldman and John Pomeroy, from left, are the producers of the forthcoming *The Secret of NIMH.*

There is much more to it than just making drawings move. It's not so much a matter of literally creating movement, but creating the spirit of life within the characters and beyond the characters into the backgrounds and environment as well. Though the animators handle character work, there is another whole department whose job it is to make the environment come alive—effects animation. This department, supervised by Dorse Lanpher, animates shadows, smoke, fog, rain, snow, water, bubbles, even dust—all those things that it takes to create a real world, that is interesting, visually stimulating and delightful to the imagination.

As we more upstairs to the space that Goldman uses for animation, he explains something of what is expected from an animator.

"Number one is that an animator has to be an actor. But the list of things that an animator has to be concerned with *other* than acting is just incredible. That's what an animator spends his first two years here doing . . . figuring out that damn list! The list is filled with little things that are principles that you have to use every day. Things like overlapping actions, line of action, volume consistency, squash and stretch, negative shapes. . . . Do you know what a negative shape is? Here I'll show you." He begins to march around the room lifting his legs and swinging his arms. "Negative space is created by a moving character." He freezes with a leg up and an arm stretched out before his body. "Here the space between my outstretched arm and lifted leg is negative space.

"Or look at paralleling action. When one part of a character moves, all of the character moves, but it doesn't all stop and start at the same time. We all fall into that trap. The actions of various parts of the body overlap. We all have to be aware of choreography and dance. Stage acting is the closest thing to the acting in animation that we do—stage acting rather than film acting.

"Now, look. You don't just *do* an action. If I'm going to do a take, I might do a squash on the face so that there is an anticipation before I do the final pose. And before I do the final pose I go up into it and then settle down into the pose. A body has to have weight and force to begin to be believable.

"Then you have to watch out for parallel lines. Look at my arm—do you see any parallel lines? No, of course not. There are angles and curves, the lines come together, they're wide and thin. . . .

"You need to be able to draw with interest and design. Work the little against the big, thin against fat . . . movement has to have texture. In es-

(Continued on page 59)

COMICS SCENE CHARACTER PROFILE #2
Rip Out and Collect the Entire Series

Annie

Compiled By ANDREW MAYFAIR

She is perhaps the most well-travelled girl in the world. Alongside the world-renowned Oliver Warbucks, she has been to Europe, the Middle East, China, darkest Africa and all around the United States of America. All along the way, this little red haired girl has touched the lives of hundreds of people. And she's only 12!

The early years in Annie's life are largely unknown and she never speaks of them. With both her parents dead, she was placed in an orphanage run by Miss Asthma. Annie and her friends were leading a hard luck life with no one coming to take them into new homes. Miss Asthma was far from a pleasant person and made life difficult for the girls.

Annie's luck changed when "Pop" and Mrs. Bottle adopted her, adding the orphan to their family of seven little "half-pints." This was to be short-lived, however, and she was soon back in the orphanage with her friends.

Mr. and Mrs. Silo, a couple of farmers, took Annie into their home but again, this did not last very long. It was beginning to look like Annie wasn't cut out to have any kind of a family life.

This proved to be wrong. Just when Annie was beginning to think her doll, Emily Marie, was her only family, someone else decided to take her in and, as they say, third time's the charm.

Her new adopted mother was the wealthy Mrs. Warbucks, who thought it would be nice to have a little girl at home. Accompanied by her dog Sandy and Emily Marie, Annie moved into the Warbucks mansion. Her life was about to change for the better.

During her first month at her new home, Annie watched Mrs. Warbucks order her husband, Oliver, about. This was clearly a case of the hen-pecked husband. Annie kept calling him Mr. Warbucks, but as her first month came to a close, he grabbed her and insisted she never call him Mr. Warbucks again. "Call me Daddy," he said.

Oddly enough, Mrs. Warbucks disappeared soon after and has never been seen since. No longer hen-pecked, Daddy Warbucks went back into business, specializing in munitions for a time. With more money pouring in and Warbucks actively involved, he soon became the wealthiest man in the world, courted by world leaders and despised by those who opposed his capitalist principals.

Annie never went to any school for long; she was too busy travelling around the world with Warbucks and getting into all sorts of adventures. Whenever she did attend a school, she impressed the teachers with just how much common knowledge she had picked up along the way.

As she travelled and learned, Annie grew up fast. People found her full of

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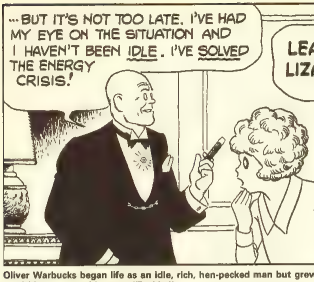


Oliver Warbucks began life as an idle, rich, hen-pecked man but grew into the world's wealthiest man and became "Daddy."

helpful advice and she was always willing to pitch in and help. During her travels she was taken in by many different people. Jack Boot, for example, found her sleeping in the basement of his shoe repair shop and took her into his home. In exchange, she cooked and cleaned for him. It was an ideal arrangement since Boot was without family and longed for companionship. Then there was a murder trial and accusations that shattered their idyllic life.

Warbucks was always going off on missions and he always left Annie provided for. She usually took those opportunities to go out and see the country. Annie was always meeting people, staying with them, getting involved in their lives and when things seemed to have quieted down, she would move on to the next town, next family, and the next adventure.

One thing Annie's adventures did for her was to make her tough. At one school a bully pushed her books into the mud. She whirled about and decked him. After that, he became her most ardent defender.

Another aspect about Annie: she never seemed to take an interest in boys. Just two years ago, in Washington, a smart-aleck Senate page, Huckie Flynn, took a liking to her but she wasn't interested. Not that she isn't a romantic; she has brought numerous couples together.

Wherever Annie went, danger always seemed to be one step ahead of her. She's been kidnapped, shot at, threatened, hit and nearly poisoned too many times to count.

Warbucks surrounded himself with only the best and when he needed help, people were only too glad to lend a hand. He was aided by many colorful and powerful figures such as the Asp, and Punjab.

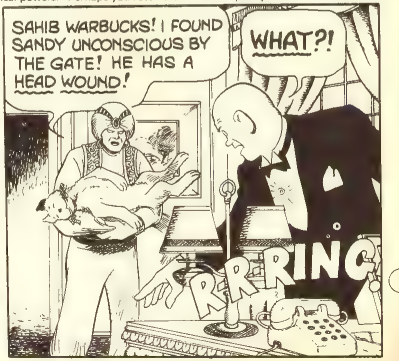
Punjab, a giant among men, comes from India and wears the traditional garb of Indian royalty. His head covered by a red turban, Punjab remains a bit of a mystery to Annie and even to Warbucks. He is a man of peace but is ready to enforce the peace with his ever-present scimitar, kept in his sash by his side.

Being a highly trained practitioner of Far Eastern ways, he commands magical powers. "Perhaps you recall that I possess some few poor powers of magic—" he once said to Annie. The one power he used repeatedly was what he called a simple vanishing act. He explained it to Annie once, "He is gone—gone to join his three 'pals'—taken for a ride on the magic carpet, shall we say? When one rides with the Magi he travels far and to lands unchartered by mortals—may we hope they had an interesting trip, eh?" This power has done away with more than a few opponents over the years.

The Asp is even more of a mystery. Of Oriental descent, he originally appeared in a dark suit and later took to wearing the dress of the ninja, Japan's deadliest form of soldier. The Asp was seemingly all-knowing and was frequently providing Warbucks with plans and suggestions when the odds seemed unbeatable. He used the shadows and often frightened Annie by turning up when she least expected to see him.

An interesting note: when Warbucks introduced Sandy to the Asp, Annie exclaimed, "Saaay! He wasn't a bit scared o' th' Asp—didja notice? It was just as if he's known th' Asp for years—" Warbucks replied, " 'Unwavering courage, loyalty and a fierce devotion' (The Asp's words to Sandy) I think perhaps Sandy and the Asp are kindred spirits—"

It's been an interesting life for this little girl, living amongst the rich and travelling around the world. She's lived the life of both rich and poor—and everything in-between. There's little Annie hasn't done but then, at 12, there's plenty of time to do what's left.



Punjab, in the turban, has always been at Warbucks' side, through thick and thin.

Len Wein and Swamp Thing

By ROBERT GREENBERGER

It has been 12 years since Len Wein created Swamp Thing. The character was to appear in a short story in the science of fiction, horror, mystery, nothing less. The story was completed and months went by before an artist was assigned on the project scheduled for issue #92.

Wein suggested to Berni Wrightson that the story would be perfect for both of their artistic temperaments and perhaps give a reputation as a good atmospheric artist who had a more commercial approach to his work. With that, the story was made the proper length and work had to get underway immediately.

Wrightson recalls in the magazine Comics Wrightson: A Look Back (The Land of Enchantment, $60), "I did the entire job in one weekend. I used photographs of friends to take the place of the actual characters. Len Kaluta is my friend and model, Bernie's wife is my model and Carol Kalish (Alan Hunter) is shown in various great [illegible] poses. Pictures

doing costume changes and running around in a state of near-frenzy. We kept that pace up all weekend."

Wein says that no one had any idea the story would strike a strong note with the fans. "It was the best selling issue of the book in a while and it was the best selling book that month [April, 1971]. They kept pushing from that point on to do a regular book. We really had no intentions of doing anything more than that short story. I didn't want to do anything more than a short story."

Sitting in his office at DC Comics, Wein looks over from his desk—piled high with artwork, letters, scripts and a near-empty candy jar—and thinks back to the time he wrote the comic book in collaboration with Wrightson and editor Joe Orlando. "He played a good editor," Wein says quickly. "He sat there and he listened, kibbutzed where necessary, made good suggestions, suggested different directions occasionally when we were going off in the wrong direction."

The first 10 issues, spanning 1972-1974, brought the creators great critical acclaim, from fan awards to rare letters of praise from Harlan Ellison. The artist had an air of familiarity to them; Wein and Wrightson were toying with all the old monster motifs: werewolves, witches, creatures from space, *et al.* "We thought it would be fun to take every one of those old genres along the way and put a new twist to it, do something different with all the old topics and subjects."

Wrightson bowed out after the first 10 issues and Wein soon followed. Writers David Michelinie and Gerry Conway tried their hand at writing the comic while Phillipine artist Nestor Redondo turned out lovely pages of art. *Swamp Thing* came at a time when horror comics were reaching a new peak, but as the 70s wore on, the cycle ended and the number of mystery and monster titles quickly dwindled at both DC and Marvel. In an effort to save the book, the character was put through major changes. By the time it ended its run with issue 24, he was a superhero and not a hunted, haunted creature.

"They were trying to save a book that was dying at that point," Wein explains. "They were trying to do what they felt was their best shot at making it more successful." The character did not die with the series; he continued to turn up as a guest star in books like *Challengers of the Unknown*. When Jenette Kahn became president at DC, one of the first things she did was order up the original 10 issues of *Swamp Thing* to be reprinted in collector's packages. Every time one of the *Original Swamp Thing Sagas* appeared, it sold well, fueling interest in a revival while DC was rapidly expanding its line. The infamous DC Implosion of 1978 killed the planned revival but the character refused to disappear, something that pleases Wein.

Ferret (David Hess) thinks he has seen the last of Cable (Adrienne Barbeau) after drowning her but he didn't expect the world premiere of Swamp Thing (Dick Durock).

PHOTOS © 1982 DC COMICS INC

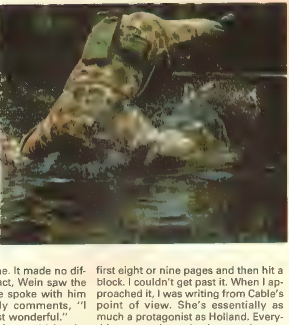
It was actually several years ago that Michael Uslan approached DC with the idea of licensing the character for a movie. Once that was secured, Uslan, a longtime comics fan and later a writer on such series as *Beowulf* and *The Shadow*, asked Wein if he would be interested in preparing a treatment. "It was offered to me just before I started editing for DC. One of the reasons I took the editorial job [after leaving a long stint at Marvel] was that I was going through a terrible writer's block and I wasn't able to write anything. I just sat on this project and couldn't produce a thing," Wein says with more than a hint of regret.

The movie was planned as an independent production and Uslan teamed up with experienced production chief Benjamin Melniker. The two formed Swampfilms Inc. and also took out a license on Batman for their Batfilms Inc. (Uslan has told the press that *Swamp Thing* is going to serve as a training ground for the *Batman* project, something he wants done absolutely *right.)* The two producers contacted director Wes Craven *(Last House on the Left)* but various problems delayed the production. Craven went off to do last summer's offering *Deadly Blessing*. It wasn't until last spring that Craven went south to make

NO LONGER COMING...TILL MAN... THEY'RE HERE...!
BUT HAVE THEY COME TO GIVE ME MORE TROUBLE
J. JASON--LOOK! A STRANGER--!
WH-WHAT'S SOMEONE FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD DOING HERE?
I DON'T KNOW, HAVOK MUTTERED, BUT I INTEND TO FIND OUT!
SEE, MA-- HE'S A BIG UH...WAIT ME?

ART © 1982 DC COMICS INC

Editor Len Wein, right, is happy to be editing the return of Swamp Thing, after spending three years with the original incarnation, above.



Swamp Thing, based on his own script but definitely embodying Wein's concepts.

Craven had read the comics and knew what he wanted, including some changes. Most noticeably, the character of government agent Matt Cable was turned into Alice Cable so Craven could explore the timeless "Beauty and the Beast" theme. He wanted actress Adrienne Barbeau for the role—a part she was hesitant to accept. She mentioned the offer to her husband, John Carpenter, who fondly remembered the comic, and he enthusiastically recommended she take the role. Barbeau read some of the comics and agreed.

The other change was to make the antagonist, Arcane, some 150 years younger than Wein had portrayed him in the comic. Louis Jourdan filled the role to Craven's satisfaction.

Did the differences bother Wein? Without hesitation, he responds, "I thought it worked fine. It made no difference to me." In fact, Wein saw the film twice before we spoke with him and he energetically comments, "I love it. I think it's just wonderful."

Uslan thought Wein would be the perfect choice to write the novelization and kept that in mind when he looked for a publisher. After signing a deal with Tor, a small New York-based paperback publisher that appears to be growing, Wein was asked to do the novel as part of a package deal. Tor is also reprinting several of the original Wein-Wrightson issues in paperback form this spring. The only catch was that Wein had three and a half weeks to complete the manuscript.

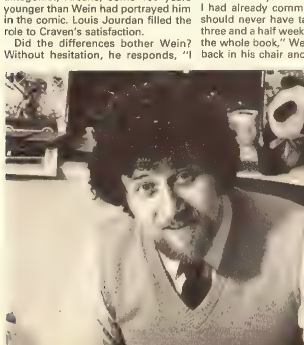
"It was a very tight deadline, and with the staff job and some other work I had already committed myself to, I should never have taken it on with a three and a half week deadline to write the whole book," Wein says. He leans back in his chair and adds, "I did the first eight or nine pages and then hit a block. I couldn't get past it. When I approached it, I was writing from Cable's point of view. She's essentially as much a protagonist as Holland. Everything was going to be the way she saw it, heard it, felt it."

This would have been Wein's first novel, although he had co-written a Spider-Man book (with longtime friend and collaborator Marv Wolfman) and a Hulk short story for a series of Marvel books he and Wolfman edited for Pocket Books. Finally, the novel assignment was turned over to David Houston, STARLOG's first editor and author of *Wingmaster*.

With the movie in production, DC felt the time was right to bring back the title. "I was very zealous about who was going to do the book when it was first discussed. I said I wouldn't be involved in it, nor would I like to see it brought back unless certain people do it. Marty Pasko and Tom Yeates were specifically who I wanted," he asserts happily. "If neither were available, I don't think we would have revived the title."

Wein was given the choice job of editing the book and says he'll b keeping a fatherly eye on it. He decided to take another character he worked wonders with, the Phantom Stranger, and revive him for the back-up slot. While planning its comeback, a decision was made that the last 10 issues of Swamp Thing would be omitted. "I would say they ignore much of what happened in the last half of the original storyline, changing back and forth, and the superhero quality. All ignored."

Wein explains why he chooses not to write the comic: "It's just a matter of not going home again. If I came back and did the book with Berni and it was lettered by Gaspar Saladino and it was colored by Tatjana Wood and everything was as it was in the old days,



The film's climax involves a knock-down, free-for-all between Swamp Thing and the monstrous version of Arcane (Louis Lourdan).

it would never be as good as the kids' memories of the original book. Forget what the book was. You'll never match the memory.

"It's always been an organic book and it's grown on its own volition. It's taken itself in the directions it wants to go. I expect it will continue to do that. There are elements that are very much 80s-ish which we wouldn't have done in the 70s—a group of punk rock vampires that will be in the third issue."

Wein pauses a moment, then adds, "I may use him as a guest star in the new *Pandora Pann* book, for an issue or so." *Pann* is a new title Wein will write for DC, due in July, with art by Ross Andru and Dick Giordano and editing by Karen Berger. The book represents the first series Wein will write in well over a year and it marks Andru's first regular feature since he left *Spider-Man* several years ago.

"It's very strange," Wein says of *Pann* and her origins. "Pandora is a character I created three or four years ago. There are people who will see it and detect a note of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and say, 'Oh no, another rip-off.' Actually it was created for Louise Jones at Warren. I was going to do it for a regular slot in *Vampirella*. By the time I got around to putting it all together, it was at the bottom of the barrel of my priorities, she had gone to Marvel and there was no one at Warren I wanted to work for, so I put it on the back burner and it sat there for years."

Wein has also been busy writing or editing other creations. One of these is the *Blue Devil,* a creation of newcomer Paris Cullen (mentioned in last issue's article on pencilling comics). *Devil* is being written by the team of Dan Mishkin and Gary Cohn, and Wein still has to choose an inker. *Blue Devil* is a superhero who, once he puts the costume on, can't take it off. No secret identity problems this time. "We need something in the slam-bang superhero mode and he fits that."

Wein has another superhero on the boards, one of his own creation, and he'd like to do it with artist George Perez. Perez, meanwhile, is busily finishing the four-issue *Teen Titans* mini-series, *Titans* annual (see last issue) and other commitments before meeting with Wein.

"I'm a writer first; the editing comes secondary but takes up most of my time," Wein sighs. In the past year he has had time to write only a few tales, but they were special: the Batman-Hulk crossover, the return of Bat Lash and "Whatever Happened to the Crimson Avenger?" a story that was included in the *Best Stories of 1981* digest. He has also found time to do all sorts of writing for the various commercial ventures DC has been vigorously pursuing. But there hasn't been much time for the small press market. He has been working on a plot for Mike Friedrich, a holdover from Friedrich's old *Star*Reach* magazine, and he managed to do a Gideon Faust story with Howard Chaykin for January's *Heavy Metal.*

He gets up, ready to go do some final Christmas shopping before the snows arrive. Putting on his jacket, straightening his tie, he turns and finally says, "I'm just looking to do more writing, period. I just need to write."

Cable watches Dr. Alec Holland (Ray Wise) explain his work as his sister, the other Dr. Holland (Nanette Brown), takes notes.

Avco Embassy will release *Swamp Thing* at Easter time, while United Artists is already releasing the film overseas. DC's comic, *The Saga of Swamp Thing,* premiered in February. The two *Swamp Thing* books from Tor are due in March. At presstime, no network had picked up the animated *Swamp Thing* series being put together by Uslan in association with Hanna-Barbera. Uslan has, however, already announced plans for a sequel. The second film will introduce moviegoers to the villainous Patchwork Man and Arcane's sinister daughter, Abigail.

***

For a much more detailed look at the *Swamp Thing* film, we recommend you find issues 15, 16, and 17 of FANGORIA magazine. Bob Martin was on the set and spoke with Mike Uslan, Wes Craven and Adrienne Barbeau, among others. For more on the character of Swamp Thing, see our character profile in issue number one.

Guest Spot

The Price

By FRANK MILLER

Editor's Note: By now, most comic fans know that Frank Miller is the writer/artist on the single "hottest" comic published today: Daredevil. *As an artist, he began doing work for DC several years ago and then moved over to Marvel. There he did fill-ins and occasional tales such as* Marvel Two-in-One *#51. His greatest fame came when he took over pencilling* Daredevil *and then, just over a year ago, Frank began writing the book too. He is also known for doing outstanding art jobs on the last two* Spider-Man *annuals. He currently is working out of Upstart Studios in Manhattan.*

It's a great year to be working in comics. Writers and artists enjoy more pay, more chances to expand in the field and into other entertainment media, and more respect from our clients and our audience, than we ever have. The comics industry is quickly becoming a place where an artist can plan for an exciting, challenging, and profitable future.

And next year promises to be even better.

Better than it was for Jerry Siegel and Joe Schuster, that's for sure.

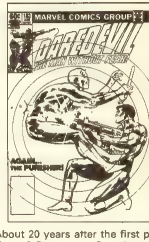
But then, they didn't know what they were getting into.

Neither did National Periodical Publications, some 40-odd years ago, when the company gambled a couple of hundred dollars on the four-times rejected fantasies of two midwestern adolescents. They didn't know that they were buying all rights to the publication and licensing of the first chapter of an American mythology.

So maybe they weren't very eager to start sending bushel baskets of money to the two kids from Cleveland when *Superman* became a million dollar property. Who can blame them? If Siegel and Schuster had wanted a bigger piece of the action, they should have swung themselves a better deal.

In a lot of ways, Siegel and Schuster represent how most of us enter the comics business. We come in young, enthusiastic, drenched in fantasy, bursting with adolescent needs and angers, looking for an outlet. What we don't bring with us, generally, is any knowledge of what business is, or how it works. We're thrilled, at first, to find that our thoughts and dreams are shared by so many others, that we can turn the eight or 10 hours a day of dreary worktime into a delightful exploration of the worlds inside our minds.

Few of us come in with the negotiation skills of Bob Kane or Charles Moulton.



About 20 years after the first publication of *Superman*, Stan Lee combined his talents with those of Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko, and added a new chapter to the Mythology of the American Superhero. They created a host of new characters, fresh born to feed a new generation of readers who found in *Spider-Man* and *The Fantastic Four* the vitality that had been drained from the DC heroes.

Maybe Marvel Comics saved the industry from extinction, maybe not. But it sure gave it a shot in the arm. Got me reading comics. Me, and millions.

I doubt that even Stan Lee knew how many of us there would be. If he did, he might have arranged to get himself a few pennies from each copy sold. But he didn't. And neither did Ditko. Or Kirby.

But you can't blame Marvel. Stan and Jack and Steve knew the deal coming in.

When I sit back and remember those days of running frantically to the neighborhood drug store, of pleading with the clerk to let me see the newly arrived bundles of comics before he had a chance to put them on the racks, of digging through the latest Marvels, knowing they'd show me so many things I'd never seen before, I am reminded of the "big bang" theory, which claims that the universe was created in a single, cosmic explosion of raw matter and energy. In just a couple of years, the entire legend that has supported Marvel Comics for two decades was conceived.

Seems crazy, now. Especially when I look at how little that is fresh and new has come out since then, and how much of Marvel's product has been permutation and repetition of its own history. Makes me wonder: what happened?

What happened to the next generation of talent like Stan Lee and Jack Kirby? Did they all take drugs and die? Did radiation corrupt our genetic pool, to prevent them from being born? Or is it true, as some say, that the original creators of Marvel Comics were one of a kind, never to be repeated phenomenon? Are the younger artists and writers not creators at all, but custodians, destined only to dust off existent artifacts, and keep them in working order?

Nah.

That next generation charged into the field, full of love and anger and talent, ready to take comics in new directions. They were led by Neal Adams, and they were Jim Starlin, Barry Smith, Berni Wrightson, and a dozen others, the first of what could have been a long line of kids who grew up on comics and were ready to give them their all. But, if you blinked, you may have missed them.

Problem was, the world had changed. But comics hadn't. The whole industry shrank dramatically in the 50s, creating a surplus of talent. By the 60s, it had become a buyer's market. So the publishers saw no reason to make the deal any better for writers and artists. Comics continued to trail every other entertainment business by decades in their policies of creator's rights and compensation.

Even so, the new guys might have

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stuck around. Some of them did. Almost nobody comes into this business expecting to get rich, or even respected. We do comics because we love the work, hard as it is.

And it is hard. To produce even a mediocre comic book, you need the skills of a writer, a director, an actor, a set designer, a choreographer, a stunt man, and an illustrator. But it's so damn fun, that I think fewer creators would have been drawn to the better money, and the dignity, that other fields offered.

Thing is, this generation has seen 40 years of Siegel and Schuster and Ditko and Kirby and many others, brilliant men who were emptied of their ideas and their energy by an industry that has rarely provided for their futures. We've seen those ideas become worth millions of dollars in comic book sales alone, and further exploited in profitable toys, TV shows, and major motion pictures.

Again, Marvel and DC are not to be blamed.

But we are, if it continues. We know what has happened. If we don't make a better deal for ourselves, it's on our heads.

That's the main reason why you haven't seen many new creations in comics. We're less willing to part with our best ideas. Most of us, anyway. We've been waiting for things to change.

Luckily, things are changing. And fast.

Here's why.

Fewer kids are getting into reading comics than ever before. Whether this is due to incompetent distribution, or a lack of fresh material, or both, the pressure is on to increase the sales.

And, as the audience shrinks, the hardcore fans, who stay with comics through thick and thin, become a larger and louder portion of the total readership. The direct sales market has grown to comprise an even third of Marvel and DC's sales, and promises to increase that fraction dramatically in years to come. So this demanding, dedicated bunch has become a powerful force, responding quickly and enthusiastically to any product like *Warlord*, the *New X-Men*, or the *New Teen Titans*, which gives them what they want. Both DC and Marvel seem to have acknowledged that satisfying and exploiting the direct market is crucial to their survival. And, because the fans have their favorite artists and writers, the creators themselves become marketable commodities.

Some of the fans have become writers, artists, and editors, bringing their influence to the very heart of the creative process.

Still other fans have gone on to publish their own comic books. They've drawn some of the disenchanted comics artists to them by offering copyright ownership and a percentage of the sales. Besides losing valuable talents like Jack Kirby and Mike Grell, Marvel and DC have found themselves faced with what could become a palpable threat in the marketplace.

Meanwhile, the world at large is discovering the value of the superhero. Movie makers and toy companies are eager to exploit the kinds of concepts that comics have to offer. But only a handful of the existing superheroes are timely enough for their purposes, and fewer still were designed to become dolls, video games, or TV shows. The entertainment world is looking to comics for new ideas. And they're got a lot of money to spend.

The most important development, however, has been a two-way influx of new talent to the management level of DC and Marvel.

From the world of book and magazine publishing come Michael Hobson and Jennette Kahn. They bring with them experience in dealing with creators, as well as knowledge of how less historically backward publishing works.

While up from the ranks of writers and artists come Jim Shooter, Dick Giordano, and Paul Levitz. They've done the job of putting together a comic book. In fact, each of them keeps his hand in it. So they're sensitive to our needs and fears. They respect our work, and know its value.

They're committed to making comics attract and reward top talent. I know this for a fact. I've talked and worked with each of them. They're trying very hard.

And they're succeeding.

Here's what they've done.

Since he became editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics four years ago, Jim Shooter has raised the ceiling of the page rates higher than anyone could have expected. This had an immediate, positive impact on our lives, and our work. It became to our advantage to increase the quality of our work, so we'd get the premium rates, rather than to increase the quantity. With the new rates, Shooter made a much higher standard of living available to the comics professional.

About two years ago, DC started paying a percentage of the money made from the licensing of a character to the character's creator. For instance, Paul Levitz and Joe Staton profitted with DC when the *Huntress* was used in a network TV special.

Last year, Marvel Comics began a new line of graphic novels. In an arrangement negotiated by Michael Hobson, Jim Shooter, and Jim Starlin, creators of original properties for this format are guaranteed ownership of the copyright not only of the novels themselves, but of the characters that are introduced in the work. Jim Starlin owns *Dreadstar*; Walt Simonson owns *Star Slammers*. Also, as part of this landmark agreement, Marvel pays royalties on each copy sold to the author. (*Editor's Note: See issue 2 for details.*)

Most recently, Jenette Kahn, Dick Giordano, and Paul Levitz designed and instituted an across-the-board profit sharing policy on their four color comics. Marvel responded immediately, announcing an identical, point for point plan. Marv Wolfman and George Perez now share in the success of the *New Teen Titans*; Chris Claremont and Dave Cockrum now have a financial stake in the sales of the *New X-Men*. The policies also provide one percent of the cover price to the creator of a new title, in perpetuity.

All of a sudden, it's a brand new ball game.

Writers and artists of established titles can look forward to sharing in the profits made from their work. It is conceivable that a comics artist could make more money next year than he has in the last five years combined. With our financial destinies tied to our success in the marketplace, the sky is quite literally the limit.

In return, the publishers can expect a greater commitment from us to work at making our comics succeed, and to work at sustaining the sales for longer periods of time. This makes for a more consistent, and therefore more profitable, product. They can also expect us to stay at work in the field. Fewer of us will be drawn to other lines of work. They've made comics pay.

Even more importantly, creators are encouraged to pull their best ideas out of the mothballs. For the first time, it's to our advantage to invest in the survival of the industry.

I don't think that this is the end of the changes, either. We're all looking at comics through different eyes. The publishers will see what they can get from us, and continue to reward us for giving our all.

They may draw back some of the writers and artists who have left the comics business.

In any case, they're less likely to lose the new guys. And more likely to see us stick to it long enough to mature our skills.

While a few prickly obstacles are still in the way, I think we'll clear them. Then you'll see another "big bang" of new concepts and characters, as fresh and lively as *Spider-Man* was in 1961. And you'll see your old favorites grow stronger, in the hands of committed, enthusiastic craftsmen.

For all the sweat and blood of the generations of talent who built this peculiar industry of ours, this is the payoff. I'm grateful to be part of it. ■

William Stout Has Designs on CONAN

By DAVID EVERITT

Conan the Barbarian is perhaps the most anxiously awaited fantasy film since *The Empire Strikes Back*. Robert E. Howard's violent, fantastic pulp novels from the 30s were followed by great success in the 60s and then translated into comic book form by Marvel in the early 70s. For the past couple of years, director John Milius (creator of such action films as *Dillinger* and *The Wind and the Lion*) has been bringing the formidable Cimmerian to the movie screen. Conan's world, the Hyborean Age, is a setting like no other (even Middle-Earth), so the production design required to determine what this world would look like was an enormous task.

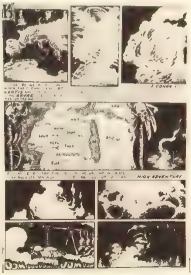
Artist William Stout came to the Conan project with a background in illustration, such as *The Illustrated Harlan Ellison*, and in comics (under fellow DC's *Tarzan* and *Warlord*). He got his start in the movie business as a production designer for the *Battle Beyond the Stars* TV series. Stout says that he first got involved in this project by accident. "I was in an art store buying art supplies," he recalls, "and I

The Hyperboreans march through the windswept Cimmerian hills to attack Conan's village in the film's opening sequences.

noticed this guy standing next to me talking about this picture he was working on, which was *Buck Rogers*, and I turned to him and said, 'I know the perfect guy to work on that picture.' He said, 'Who's that?' and I said, 'Me.' So he said, 'Well, come on down and show your portfolio.' I did and I was hired for work the same hour," Stout contributed extensive designs for this show but only his insignias were actually used.

Stout's work on *Conan* was much more satisfying. He was first approached about the project by Bob Greenberg, a friend of his who was working for the then-producer Ed Pressman. Greenberg kept asking Stout to try to get work on *Conan* but, as much as he would have liked to, Stout had to decline because he was tied up with other work at the time. Greenberg insisted that he at least come over to the studio to take a look at production designer Ron Cobb's work, but Stout didn't even have time for that. Then, once again, a chance meeting turned the situation around. "Finally I got a break in my schedule," says Stout. "The national book fair was going on in Los Angeles and I went there with my portfolio and I ran into Ron Cobb. Ron looked over the portfolio and said, 'We've got a problem with the production. All the artists I like John Milius doesn't like and all the artists John likes I don't like. But your stuff may be just the kind that may be perfect for the film and you're the first person at the top of my list. If you'd please stop down and drop off your portfolio so John could see it, I'd appreciate it.'

"The next week I went down there and John happened to be in the office at the same time. I showed him the



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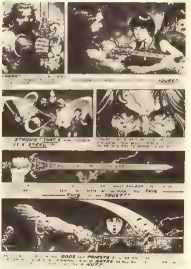
portfolio and he'd remembered my "Shattered like a Glass Goblin" piece I'd done for *Heavy Metal* and he'd liked that at the time and I had my *Dragonslayer* portfolio with me and he liked that. Then he just quickly went through the rest of the stuff and as he was walking out the door he said, 'Hire him.' I went to work the following Monday."

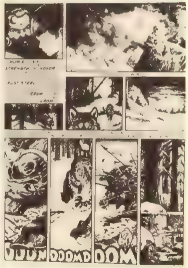
For the first two months that he worked on the picture, Stout was involved solely with storyboarding. As he watched Cobb working on production design he decided his talents would be best put to use in collaborating with Cobb on designing the film. Cobb was agreeable to this and both artists applied themselves from there on in to the task of visualizing the Hyborean Age.

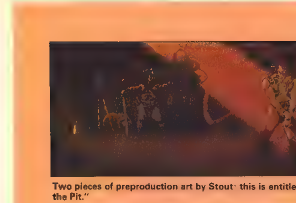
Stout was already well versed in the Conan mythology before he joined Cobb in the art department for the Milius film. "Ever since the first [Frank] Frazetta cover appeared I was an avid Howard fan," Stout says. "I not only followed the books but read them all a couple of times apiece. So I was one guy who was really concerned that the picture be true to Howard."

The job of designing Howard's imaginative world on paper was an unusually comprehensive and painstaking assignment. Stout reports, "There was costume design, set design, designing the look of the picture, designing the armor, doing all the production pieces, matte paintings, if necessary. Since we were designing *Conan* there really wasn't any existing place that looked like the Hyborean Age, so we had to design everything from door knobs to doors to door frames to house to shoes—everything had to be designed. An incredible

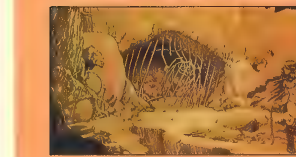
As Conan does battle, above, we present a rare treat, the first six pages of William Stout's storyboards for the movie.







Two pieces of preproduction art by Stout: this is entitled "Training for the Pit."



Simply called, "Aftermath." Notice the amount of detail put into the simple designs and the use of toned colors.

amount of work. What amazes me is that Ron and I were the only artists hired to work on the picture." In all, Stout worked on the movie for a year-and-a-half, and Cobb for longer than that.

For the first year that Stout was involved in the film he worked quite closely with director Milius. "Milius came into the office in the art department just about every day, that was his favorite place to hang out and he would constantly give us input and tell stories. He was also writing the picture as we were designing. He would come in every few days with a few pages of the script and read them to us." Milius was very concerned about the look of the movie and offered suggestions about the designs. The script itself was a useful springboard for ideas for Stout and Cobb. Stout describes Milius' script as being "very visual, much easier for us than a regular script in that it reads like a novel. It has a lot of description."

The Conan stories have some very impressive precedents as far as visual design is concerned. The cover paintings of Frazetta for the Conan books have left a vivid impression on anyone familiar with the works of Robert E. Howard, and the early issues of the Conan comic book drawn by Barry Smith offered a very different but no less dramatic style, as did the later comics pencilled by John Buscema. Despite this rich artistic heritage that preceded the Milius movie, Stout and Cobb made a point of not drawing upon previous works but instead developed an approach of their own. Their particular slant on the material is very intriguing. According to Stout, "We were trying to do our own concept of *Conan,* which is a more historical concept. What we did is take existing ancient designs like the Celtic designs, the Vikings, the ancient Chinese, the samurais, things like that, and we designed backwards in time. We tried to unthink them, we tried to make them more primitive. We thought, All right, this is how they looked back in the middle ages, the dark ages, or back at the time of Christ; let's undesign them, design them in reverse. We could see how they started at that point and were designed forward, were made more intricate; let's just try to go back in the opposite direction."

This historical perspective, Stout feels, will make the fantasy elements of *Conan* more believable. "When you're working with fantasies, it's very important to not have everything fantastic. You've got to give the audience some basis in reality so that they can believe the fantasy when it comes along. If everything is fantastic, there's nothing that they can hang on to."

The thorough research and the careful planning that went into the design of the movie accounted for much of the lengthy time that was devoted to the making of *Conan.* Long production schedules have been the rule on Milius films; according to Stout, *The Wind and the Lion* took about three years to make and *Any Wednesday* was in the making for around two-and-a-half years. As soon as Stout began work on *Conan* he was introduced to the meticulous Milius method. The storyboards he was to draw were not supposed to be like ordinary storyboards; Milius wanted them to look like comic book pages. Stout was told to take all the time he needed to make the storyboards as detailed as possible. As a result, Stout ended up spending around five days per page. A great deal of time was also involved in the editing stage so that Milius could hone the picture.

When he is asked what work he is most proud of in this production, Stout is very modest, opting to speak about the film in general rather than his own contributions in particular. He says, "The work I'm most proud of in the picture is something you really can't see. I think my biggest contribution was keeping everyone enthused about the picture, keeping the spirits up for everyone, keeping everyone energized and really high about what they were doing. I was constantly reminding them that they weren't making just another picture; they were making possibly the *Wizard of Oz* of the 80s, or something that was very, very special." Enthusiasm of this order must certainly be encouraging to the many Robert E. Howard fans who have been hoping that the motion picture will live up to the excitement of the books and comics.

His work on *Conan* now completed, Stout can now return to other projects. Much of his time is spent preparing the Bantam Books trade paperback *The Dinosaurs* edited by Byron Preiss, for which he contributed the striking artwork of the giant reptiles in every phase of life. He is also working on a new Preiss project which is an illustrated volume of Ray Bradbury's prehistoric stories and poems, as well as a project of his own for the European market, a comic series that will tell its story without the benefit of dialogue. As far as movies are concerned, his considerable designing abilities are being put to use on a proposed SF film that is based on Roger Zelazny's *Amber* that is being produced by Robert K. Weiss, the same man who gave you *Kentucky Fried Movie* and *The Blues Brothers.* For fans of first-rate illustration, comic art and stylish movie design, there seems like there should be a steady supply from William Stout. ■

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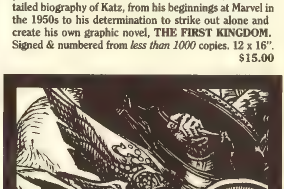

(above) details from portfolio plates

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The Four Labors of HERCULES

Bob Layton explains the newest direction for the Olympian—Silly

By DAVID McDONNELL

Marvel editor-in-chief Jim Shooter has explained that he has wanted to try mini-series for years but it really hasn't been feasible until now. So, 1982 will see several Marvel limited-series premieres, carrying on a format DC has found very successful.

DC employed it in 1979 to recount the origins—yet again—of Superman, Batman and the Legion of Super-Heroes as well as to reveal heretofore unknown secrets of The Phantom Zone and the Green Lantern Corps. At Marvel, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Dragonslayer* and *For Your Eyes Only* appeared in what amounted to four-color mini-series in last summer's "multi-format blitz" of movie adaptations.

Now, as Marvel plans on premiering *Wolverine*, *The Vision and The Scarlet Witch* and other titles, the mini-series mode is finally becoming a viable showcase for both new and existing characters and concepts.

"We've wanted to do these mini-series for a long time," explains Michael Z. Hobson, Marvel's vice president/publishing. "It allows us to reward secondary characters, ones who've become popular with fans, with their own titles in a very limited way. We can test them without committing ourselves, in the newsstand business, to at least a year of publication.

"That's the real attraction—experimenting with these limited series and finding the ones, according to sales results, which *may* be able to carry their own regular books."

Of Marvel's maiden attempts, the publication of *Wolverine* and *The Vision and The Scarlet Witch* isn't very surprising. Both titles feature longtime fan favorites on loan from popular, established series. A third limited-series stars a "nothing character," yet, it may be the most wildly-original mainstream comic since Howard the Duck waddled out of that mystical swamp. It's a new, off-the-wall, almost surreal *Hercules, Prince of Power*.

The *Hercules* limited-series is the brainchild of 28-year-old artist Bob Layton, whose three-and-half-year stint as *Iron Man*'s inker and co-plotter (with writer David Michelenie) helped boost that moribund title to Marvel's top ranks. A Midwestern comics fan, Layton achieved professional status as an inker for Charlton, then served as an artist's assistant to the late Wally Wood, and eventually became a DC Comics staffer for "one stormy year." He joined Marvel in 1976, worked on *Iron Man*, and co-created the new Ant Man.

With *Hercules*, Layton adds writing to his repertoire as he faces the formidable challenge of forging a mini-series success from an Olympian loser. He explains why: "Go up to someone on the street and say, 'X-Men,' and they don't know what you're talking about. But say, 'Hercules,' and everyone has an automatic, basic understanding of this muscular hero from mythology, high school stuff or movies.

"It always seemed odd that no one could ever sell that character as a comic. Overthe years, all the companies have tried. I've worked on some of those books, like *Hercules Unchained*, or *The Champions*, a real smeller. It's always the same schtick when they do the gods on earth–fighting big gobbledygook monsters and reacting to the modern world. Boring.

"Readers have never really liked Marvel's Hercules in anything he's appeared in before. So, I'm taking this concept that's *never* worked anywhere and completely overhauling the Marvel version.

"He looks like the character who occasionally hangs around with The Avengers, but he's a whole new Hercules, almost a clone. Being an Olympian now has very little to do with the story. I'm ignoring the past issues and going by what I think he's supposed to be like. So, it's an off-the-wall feature, though not in the funny animal sense. Now, every time something serious happens, it'll be countered by something absolutely ridiculous.

"My approach to *Hercules* can be summed up in one word: *silly*."

It all began in early 1980. Having toiled on *Iron Man* for almost two years, Layton was casting about for a new project. "*Iron Man* is a realistic book," he says. "It's couched in everyday settings, offices, hardware, technology. I really wanted to go 180 degrees in another direction and do something different, a fantasy feature that never takes itself seriously."

So he popped into the office of Marvel Comics Editor-in-Chief Jim Shooter for a sales pitch: "I've got this idea for a great book, Jim—*Hercules in Space!*"

Layton laughs. "Jim threw me out of his office. And you know, he *will* do that to me. Anyway, I told him my premise, something unlike most of the very grim—but good—books at Marvel, this very light-hearted *Hercules*.

"'That's interesting,' he said, and in the usual Jim Shooter style, he picked the concept apart, added a few of his own ideas and put the pieces back so they fit together even better. He told me to work on it and propose it again later.

"Finally, I came up with a hook and some plots, and hooked Jim. He even said, as a compliment, that the first one I plotted—which will be the fourth story to appear—was so good that he wished he had the time to script it himself."

However, Shooter did agree to serve as the book's editor and authorized a three-issue run (later extended to four monthly issues, as were the other mini-series, to better gauge sales appeal). Making his debut as penciller/inker *and* writer, Layton says he's relying heavily on Shooter's scripting expertise.

"Actually, although this is my first series," he reveals, "I did my very first writing on an inventory issue of *Spider-Man* which I'm drawing for Tom DeFalco. It's not a typical *Spider-Man* story—no super-villains, none of the supporting cast. Spidey is a character I've never personally related to, but this tale really gets into his head.

"When I was a kid, what I *did* like about Spidey—and what isn't really there now because each new writer helped him mature a little more—was that Peter Parker was always struggling with adolescence, trying to grow up. Everybody can relate to that idea. I certainly can, that's for sure!

"I wanted to do stories about growing up and still make them kind of strange. What's stranger than choosing a 3,000-year-old Olympian god who's still struggling with adolescence?

"After all, it's not, 'Wow! Hercules is such a great character!' He isn't. He's a nothing character, and I can play on that fact and write stories about a guy who learns, as he grows up, the value of people, things, and his own beliefs. He starts out being vacuous and shallow, and he ends up being vacuous and shallow, but *realizing it.*"

With his revision of the muscle-bound Avenger, Layton is also breaking another link to the Marvel universe. This mini-series occurs *outside* the company's continuity labyrinth. "That's one thing I never liked about *Iron Man,*" the writer/artist says. "We'd do a multi-issue story about Tony Stark coping with alcoholism, and in those same months, Iron Man would be over beating up The Champions or battling alongside The Avengers.

"It really blows an individual series' continuity, so since Hercules is an immortal and it doesn't matter very much when he does these things, Jim agreed to let me bypass continuity. My stories just take place somewhere sometime somewhen, but in my head, I place it 150 or 200 years in the future."

The first issue of *Hercules, Prince of Power,* due out in April, sets up the storyline. Layton's obvious enthusiasm for the concept comes through as he literally performs the narrative, offering sound effects and voice characterizations:

"Hercules is a sort of lovable buthead.

"After partying on Earth for about 150 years, he arrives back on Olympus where they're having a day of silence or some sort of sacred religious ritual, and he's like a bull in a china shop. 'Hey, gods! Herc's home! Hey! How ya doin'? Let's *party!*'

"Zeus finally gets angry. 'I've had it with 3,000 years of this! I'm going to make you snap out of it and humble you by casting you out of Olympus.'

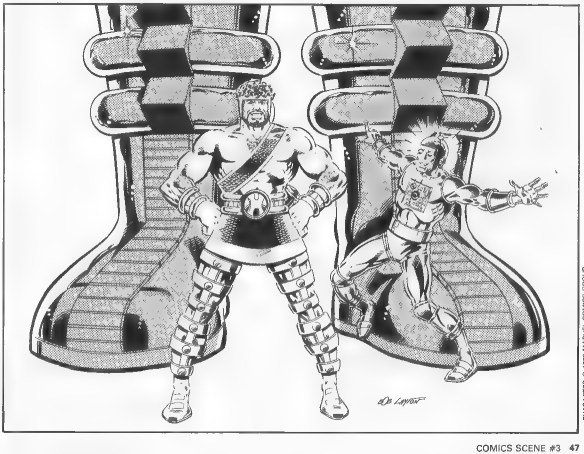
"'BIG deal! Who cares??? I'll go down to Earth, meet a lot of women, go to a lot of parties, drink good booze.'

"'No,' Zeus says. 'Down there, you're better than most men, a god, but out in space, in the vast myriad of galaxies that exist, you're a very tiny creature.' Well, he says something like that and exiles this lovable buthead to way out there."

Those far reaches of outer space provide the book's highly-technological environment: Skrulls, Rigellans and other *Star Wars*-like refugees crowd panel backgrounds teeming with computers and intricate, Kirby-esque machinery; and there, in the foreground, is the mythical Hercules, a magical character who travels between planets in a horse-drawn chariot.

This juxtaposition of science and magic gives the mini-series a distinctive visual humor which extends to what the well-dressed Olympian will be wearing—the native dress, no matter how bizarre, of any planet he's visiting.

Layton has also redesigned Herc's regular (tourist) costume, transforming the familiar green and orange battle togs into a similarly-colored chain mail outfit with added gold ornamental trimming. The lion's head belt buckle has been replaced by a detachable discus, the perfect func-



CHARACTER © 1982 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

tional weapon for surprise frisbee attacks on alien spacecraft. And, instead of a green head band, Layton has restored Herc's early battle helmet, "the one with the strange ear flaps, because I like it."

To help insure a consistent visual style for *Hercules,* Shooter and Layton have lined up letterer Rick Parker and colorist Bob Sharen, an *Iron Man* veteran. Depending on availability, both will work on all four issues. Layton assesses their abilities, "I wanted them because Rick does fantastic alien lettering and Bob really thinks of himself as a continuation of the artist. It's not just slapping color down on the page, he'll ask me what I intended for this panel or that. However, *if* there's time, I may just color one issue myself."

The stories themselves are contemporary fairy tales designed for reading on two levels—as pure entertainment or as moralistic fables. In the tradition of other mythic heroes, Layton has equipped his Olympians with a sidekick to chronicle the epic adventures. Holmes had his Watson, Tarzan, his Jane, and Hercules, his Recorder.

"See, in the first story, Herc comes across the Rigelian fleet," Layton explains. "They're fleeing from the giant space gobbler or whatever that ate their planet. Eventually, the Rigelians decide to send a Recorder, one of their robotic observers, along with Herc who says, 'Aye, you are in my charge, friend Recorder, I will protect thee . . . blah, blah, blah'

"Well, whatever happens to Herc happens to this android. He loses an arm here, a bolt there, and gets strange replacements. That's something Jim Shooter and I thought would be humorous. Ever drive a VW into a small Midwestern town and try to get spare parts? Nigh upon impossible! And the poor Recorder finds that's true in the backwaters of outer space, too.

"I haven't named him yet, but he's a brother machine to the one we saw in *Thor.* I couldn't do this stuff to that Recorder, but this poor sucker—he's had it!"

Hercules won't make out much better; each issue offers a new, painful lesson to the exiled Olympian. "The first one deals with humility," Layton announces. "I picked up on a great bit that Jim Shooter wrote in *The Avengers* (#211) Hercules is standing in Avengers Mansion and sees Wonder Man, 'Forsooth, I don't know this fellow.'

" 'I'm Wonder Man. I'm nearly as *strong* as Thor.'

" 'As strong as Thor??!! Have at thee, then!' And BOOM! Herc knocks him through the wall.

" 'What are you doing?' Wonder Man says. BOOM! WHAM!! BLAM!!!

"Finally, Wonder Man yells, 'Get away,' and knocks Herc through the other wall. Herc is impressed, 'Verily you speak the truth, *I* call thee friend.' "

Layton pauses. "I mean, that's the way he *meets* people. It's not exactly the most intelligent way of introducing yourself. This bit gave me some insight into Herc's character, and so, in the first issue, Herc is in a bar on another planet, very depressed, sitting there drinking while the Recorder watches. Then, through the door walks the biggest, ugliest, meanest-looking thing you've ever seen, this huge monster called a *yherigot*—with a 'gh.'

"Herc asks, 'What the hell is that?'

"An alien leans over and says, 'A pherigot. They're the strongest creatures in the galaxy.'

" 'The strongest creature in the galaxy??!! Have at thee, then!!' Herc jumps across the bar, hits this thing—BOOM!!—and it crumples into a pile and starts blubbering.

"Everybody in the bar looks down on Herc. 'What a jerk! Why did he do that? Pherigots are also the most peace-loving creatures in the galaxy.' Since Hercules thrives on adoration, he has to redeem himself in the eyes of these bar flies.

Layton's second tale features a mythological flashback and pits Herc against a more awesome emotion—the power of the human heart. "It's all about love," the writer/artist says. "Hercules loses his chariot in a drag race. The Recorder gave him probable odds to beat a starcruiser—but he lost.

"Herc needs bucks to buy his chariot back and hears of a reward for saving a girl kidnapped by invincible marauders. Of course, he goes and wades through them, kicking ass and rescuing the girl. Since no one thought that could be done, there isn't any actual reward money, and Herc decides to keep the girl awhile.

"She falls madly in love with the big and beautiful budhead. They get amorous, and Herc throws the Recorder out of the room. So, the Recorder goes around to the rear of the inn, gets up on a few crates near the window, and starts recording what's happening inside. That's his job.

"And the police come, arrest the Recorder as a Peeping Tom, and throw him in a jail cell with a space junkie."

Religion is the theme of the third issue. After being worshipped as a god for 3,000 years, Hercules suddenly realizes he isn't really a *superior* being. He has to face this new, more-accurate self-image.

"I don't want to give away too much," Layton cautions, "but he becomes, in a way, a defiler of someone else's god.

"In the comics medium, you can say a lot of things without being tasteless. Many readers thought our stories on alcoholism in *Iron Man* were controversial. Not really. They only dealt with a subject that isn't generally seen in comics. Still, my basic drive with *Hercules* is to entertain. I won't sacrifice that for a lot of platitudes, and I'm not doing this story to poke holes in anyone's beliefs, except Herc's."

According to Layton, he has saved "the best, funniest, and silliest story for last." In *Hercules #4,* the Olympian encounters another omnipotent wanderer from Marvel continuity, Galactus.

"I know, I know," Layton laments. "Galactus has been done 137,000 times and it's always the *same* story. He comes to eat Earth, the Fantastic Four beat up the Herald-of-the-Month and trick The Big G into leaving and vowing never, ever to come back until he's hungry again.

"Galactus has just been done out the wazoo.

"There's only one way to do it without cliches—a funny Galactus story, portraying that side of the big guy who's still human and humorous."

Does that mean giant whoopee cushions? Superflies in fake ice cubes? Cosmic plastic dog vomit?

Layton shakes his head. "No, we don't want to violate the dignity of these characters. We can't have Doc Doom tap dancing, or someone striking a match on his armor. Oh, that *was* cruel, wasn't it?

"Anyway, I think I'm doing this with some subtlety. That issue does have a very weird title, 'Hey, This Isn't *Just* Another Galactus Story.' I mean, what other story begins with a drinking bout between Hercules and Galactus?"

When the mini-series is finished, Bob Layton isn't sure what project he'll tackle next; he *does* want to work on a regular series again. The planned-*New Ant-Man* title is a possibility, though it hasn't been discussed. And Layton hopes *Hercules* will attain sufficient sales success to warrant its continuation as a regular series.

"I have things I'd like to do with it yet. I've only got about 10 *Hercules* stories in my head right now," he says. "With these first four issues, I hope readers will laugh a lot and enjoy them. If they read between the lines, they'll get a little more than entertainment, but I want them to have fun with it, because I'm doing it to have fun."

With *Hercules, Prince of Power* slated to reach newsstands shortly, Bob Layton does have another goal. "This poor, nothing character has never been important enough before," he explains, "but if *nothing else* comes out of this mini-series, there's one thing I want to accomplish.

"I want to get Hercules on his *own* Slurpee cup." ■

The King of Japanese Comics

Part One

By JIM WHEELOCK

The Japanese word "manga" can, by the way it's used, mean "comic strip," "comic book," "caricature" or "animated cartoon," thus combining in a single thought what Americans generally consider to be separate fields. This interrelationship exists in reality as well—so much so, that it is virtually impossible to talk about Japanese comics without looking at Japanese animation, especially when we look at the fantastic career of Dr. Osamu Tezuka, Japan's "King of Comics."

The Japanese have been telling stories with pictures for centuries. In fact, the complex Japanese alphabet is based on pictograms, and can almost be viewed as an abstract comic strip. Beyond that there are the traditional *ezoshi* (picture book) and *emakimono* (picture scroll); there is also the "paper play," *kami-shibai,* a form of street theater in which a performer would show his audience a sequence of pictures telling a story, acting the dialogue and sound effects as he went along. It's possible to find narrative work throughout Japanese art history, particularly in print-making. Suffice it to say that when American-style comic strips were introduced at the turn of the century, they found a ready audience, and the Japanese comic strip industry began.

In fact, the first of what we would today recognize as comic books appeared in Japan in the 1920's, a decade before the American *Funnies on Parade,* previously considered to be the world's first comic book.

(Incidently, as we look at Japanese comics, you ought to know that they are read right to left, rather than the Western style of left to right.)

Today, Japan has one of the world's largest comic book industries. The comics basically divide into "Boys'," "Girls' " and "Adult" comics. Most are anthology titles of about 300-400 pages, with 10 or 20 popular serials

The one, the only . . . Astro Boy.

running at any given time. The stories in the Boys' books feature science fiction, sports adventures (particularly baseball, boxing and auto-racing), superheroes, *samurai* and *yakuza* (gangsters), and humorous stories. The "Girls' " comics feature love stories and romantic adventure, while the "Adult" comics lean toward graphic violence and soft-core eroticism.

Professor Yoshiya Soeda, in his study *Comic-Book Culture in Contemporary Japan,* estimates the circulation of *Boy's Jump,* the most popular "Boys' " comic book, at 2,500,000 copies *weekly.* He further estimates that the top four comics have a combined weekly circulation of 7,200,000. With a adolescent population of about 12 million, that means about two-thirds of all Japanese boys are regular comics readers! These are awesome figures when we look at American comics today, when a *successful* title sells around 250,000 copies a month—even when we take into consideration the American boom era of the 40's, when Superman and the original Captain Marvel sold nearly two and three million copies each.

Overall, there seems to be a greater acceptance of comic books and strips in Japan than in the U.S. Successful serials are reprinted in beautiful paperback editions, and are often the source material for animated and live action films and television series, leading into a wide area of toys and merchandising. It's not unusual to see ads featuring a prominent cartoon character as "spokesman" for a line of, say, electronic watches. It's been suggested that in some cases the toys have been created first, and then the comics and animated bits developed to sell them to the public.

All of this is especially astounding when we consider that this vast industry grew to a large extent from the vision of one man; an artist, writer and film director who is working actively today. That man is Dr. Osamu Tezuka, Japan's Walt Disney, its Harvey Kurtzman, its Jack Kirby—and a great deal more!

What Tezuka did was to break apart the static, two-dimensional style of Japanese comics, filling his pages with a manic, jumping non-stop action that featured motion with movie-influenced story-telling techniques. As a writer, he created powerful, emotionally involving story-lines that worked for adults as well as for children.

"From the beginning," he told us, "I knew that I wanted to make films . . . but that, of course, was very expensive. In order to get the money to begin doing films, I did comics." Born in 1928 in Osaka, Japan, Tezuka saw many of the early Max Fleisher Popeye and Betty Boop cartoons, as well as Oswald the Rabbit and Farmer Al Falfa cartoons as part of a film club in elementary school. He credits these, along with the Disney films that he saw after what is known as the Pacific War, as forming the basis of his style.

Tezuka's comics do, in fact, look like movie cartoons on paper. He created a clean and elegant style, with a certain "cuteness," but also with a sense of solidity and strength.

Despite his early interest in cartooning, Tezuka studied medicine at Osaka University, supporting himself, naturally, by doing comics. He even practiced briefly, and did some work in research before becoming a full-time comic artist. His first published strip, *Machan no Nikkicho,* ran in a children's magazine in 1946, while he was in school. A year later he had his first best-seller, *Shin Takarajima* ("New Treasure Island"). Working prolifically over the years, he created dozens of series and hundreds of characters, enabling him to move into film and television animation.

The most famous Tezuka character is easily *Tetsuwan-Atom* ("Mighty Atom"), known to millions of Americans as *Astroboy* in his U.S. TV run. The adventures of a super-powered robot-boy, created in the image of his inventor's dead son, first appeared in 1951 and became the longest running Japanese animated series, lasting until 1968.

"My external reason for writing the series," Tezuka told us, "had to do with nuclear power. You see, *Atom* moves by nuclear power, and this was still during the period when there was a lot of fear, particularly in Japan, that nuclear weapons would be used

While we were treated to a black and white, mundane Kimba, Japanese audiences also got Tezuka's high-adventure version.

again. The association of nuclear energy and war was so strong in Japan that the message of the strip was to show a way in which nuclear energy could be used for the benefit of mankind, for peaceful purposes. That's the external, the public reason for the strip.

"The real reason, for me, was to create a story about prejudice and discrimination using the metaphor of humans and robots. In the strip, humans are always feuding that the robots are just machines, and that they can't have any humanity or feelings. On the other hand, the robots, who work for humans and want to be friends of man, are distressed at always being called machines or toys. Tetsuwan Atom stands between the two, working for man and in the image of man, yet himself a robot . . ."

That's the thinking behind Atom's adventures with the deadly Hot Dog Men (androids with the brains of dogs), the killer robot Atlas and the gigantic robot Satan. When he talks of his work, Dr. Tezuka often speaks in terms of concepts and ideas. His stories work because he expresses them in exciting action. When Tezuka formed his own Mushi Productions in 1961 to produce TV cartoons, *Tetsuwan-Atom* was his first series, premiering in 1963. The show continued *Atom*'s phenomenal success, running 193 half-hour episodes, and adapting all of the 100 *Atom* comic stories, as well as using versions of many of Tezuka's other works, rewritten to feature the robot-boy.

As *Astroboy, Atom* had a successful run on NBC in the U.S., although little or no screen credit was given to Tezuka, and the show's many admirers had no idea that it had originated in Japan. Although they are only now learning his name, Tezuka was a strong influence on many young cartoonists and illustrators growing up in that era. Ironically, Gold Key issued an Americanized version of an *Astroboy* comic that is a sheer horror compared to Tezuka's comics work.

Among Tezuka's more recent projects has been a new, full-color version of the *Atom* TV series, utilizing animation techniques that were unavailable to him on the original black-and-white productions.

In 1965, Mushi's (and Japan's) first color cartoon series was *Jungle Tatei* ("Jungle Emperor"), based on Tezuka's 1950 comic book serial. The tale of a white lion, raised by humans, who returns to the jungle to create an animal civilization so that the creatures can protect themselves from a predatory humanity, became *Kimba, the White Lion* in the U.S. The original story followed the lion from birth until his death. NBC, who was financing the project, felt that children wouldn't identify with an aging character. They paid Tezuka to make two pilot films, and chose the one featuring the young lion throughout. Undaunted, Tezuka used the profit from the 52-episode series to make his own version, which, as it happened, was not as successful with the Japanese public as the earlier episodes.

Among *Tatei/Kimba*'s most notable features is the beautiful music by Isao Tomita, today considered one of the world's finest synthesizer performers.

Throughout his film and TV career, Tezuka has continued to work in comics. In 1967, in *Com Magazine*, he created his most complex and challenging comics work, *Hinotori* ("The Phoenix"), a dazzling search for the god/bird Phoenix, a drink of whose blood gives eternal life. Tezuka tells us of man's pursuit of the bird from the prehistoric past to the distant future. In its most recent form, *Hinotori* is the starting point for Dr. Tezuka's multi-million-dollar animated space adventure, *Phoenix 2772*.

In the next COMICS SCENE, we'll talk with Dr. Tezuka about *Phoenix 2772*, one of the high points in world animation, and look at his other films and TV work, including *Marine Express, Bander Book*, and the X-rated *Cleopatra, Queen of Sex*. ■

Osamu Tezuka's best known creation is the robot child, Astro Boy. From the original comic book, the three pages reproduced below recount the origin, in Japanese. Basically, in the future, a boy lost control of a car and crashed. His father spared no expense to build a robot duplicate of his son. Whether it cost six million dollars or not is unknown.

JACK KATZ & THE FIRST KINGDOM

By HOWARD ZIMMERMAN

Jack Katz is a man possessed. Possessed by an almost overwhelming love of life, the human form, the joy of discovery, classical art and beautiful music. But he is even more possessed by a singular vision: *The First Kingdom.*

The *Kingdom* is a monumental work for which the 52-year-old Katz has set aside 12 years of his life. But more than time and attention, Katz has given and continues to give his heart and soul to this graphic novel which, with the upcoming publication of Book 16, is now two-thirds complete. It is published by Bud Plant's small press in Grass Valley,

California. The Kingdom, with Book 1 having been published in 1974, is far and away the longest running continuing-story comic in the history of alternative and underground publishing. In fact, you'd have to look to the daily newspaper strips to find a longer running saga.

The *Kingdom* itself is a sprawling epic that encompasses a startling variety of advanced and primitive human and alien races, sophisticated robots and immortal cyborgs, monsters and mutants, gods and demi-gods. The story spans many millenia, taking place on Earth, on alien worlds, in deep space, other galaxies, the home of the gods and their hellish place of exile. The minor characters are as fully realized as the major ones, whether they are starship captains or barbarian soldiers, children of the gods or plotting sycophants.

The fabric of the *Kingdom* is a complex tapestry, a multi-dimensional story that is hard to pin down in a sentence or two, especially for the author. "I'm trying to describe the potential outcome of certain societies," Katz begins, then decides to try a different tack. He approaches the heart of the story tangentially, relating the plot foundations laid down in the first few books.

"The *Kingdom* is about the regeneration of the Earth after an atomic holocaust, and the development of different cultures in different parts of the world." The primitive survivors, humans and atomic mutants, start the long climb back up to civilization and technology. "But at the same time that this is happening, a very sophisticated society was monitoring the Earth, just before the atomic holocaust. And they sent out a Galactic Hunter (an advanced starship) to try and prevent the nuclear exchange." Needless to say, they were not successful. "The command officers of the ship were caught on Earth. Some of them mutated. Some of the other crew members were also trapped on Earth after the Galactic Hunter was destroyed.

"During the time that the Hunter is traveling to the Earth, I have an almost *Rashomon*-type reflection. Each of the crew members begins to relate a story. Almost every book (in the sequence) is dedicated to one of the crew members talking about his past. In one past history I have a society that becomes extremely sophisticated, and they inject into their bloodstreams the same memory sera that animates their cyborgs. They do this because they want to become immortal. Half of the scientific community thinks this is not a good idea. It may interfere with the natural order of things, a master plan of which they know nothing. Sides are taken and a great war ensues. They are so sophisticated that they destabilize the magnetic fields holding their galaxy together and it implodes.

Besides the ultimate knowledge you are to receive ... you will be augmented to that special wisdom ... for among the wisest be who can
avoid my being there was the task. Adieu to reader who knew everything that would occur and programmed me for this
reason. You will also have the political prisoner, the rebel, the fanatic ... in fact every imaginable human and cyborg, and anticipating fate. Are
you ready?
Can you give me a reason that will support
your wisdom that can match my projection?

Opposite: Tundran and Fara, the human heroes of *The First Kingdom*, visualized by Katz exclusively for this article. Top: A panel from Book 10, in which the Oracle recounts his origin; the Eyetelect reveals his destiny. Above rt: The Oracle performs his grim task of projection and warning. Above left: creator Jack Katz.

The fallibility of god-like creatures, human, alien and machine, is recapitulated throughout the series in many different forms. The Oracle of the Tamra (Earth) for instance, is a mysterious and respected blind seer, whose knowledge of events past and future give him a god-like aura. But when he reveals his origin, in Book 10, we see that his powers were given him by a vastly superior, artificially constructed servant of an even more sophisticated race of space-faring humans. The creature is called an Eyetelect. But in the retelling of *its* origin we find that the Eyetelect and its creators, too, were fallible.

Katz gets closer to the core of the Kingdom when he defines it as being "a story of Man after the fall." In the interweaving of the plot threads we are constantly looking back at a variety of pasts, perhaps in search of the original state of grace in which Man lived before the fall, as well as anticipating a future in which Man's dark side is once again overcome and a new golden age has dawned.

So far in the *Kingdom* we have seen no true gods—only aspiring trans-gods who fail to rise above their basic natures. The message in this is clear: don't follow leaders just for the sake of following. Don't relinquish responsibility for your life or subjugate your goals and ambitions to those of societal leaders. False leadership is oppressive to the spirit and soul; conversely, it's up to the individual to take responsibility for his or her own life.

Katz notes that the development of this theme followed from "two science fiction stories that I'm aware of, that are parallel . . . that are triggering devices, in a sense. One of them is H.G. Wells' *Things to Come*, in which he

HISTORICAL PRECEDENT

Now a new source for some of the thematic material of the *Kingdom* is revealed. "I'm going to read to you from two different bibles," Katz says. "One is the Guatemalan Bible, the Popul Vuh. '. . . laid stress on the great

From Book 11: "The Survivors." A flash-back sequence in which the Oracle learns his real background from Aquare.

scientific knowledge of the first men. They were able to know all and they examined all four corners of the four points of the arc of the sky and the round face of the Earth.' This sacred book of the Mayans says that the primeval race 'could see the large and the small in the sky and on the Earth . . . but their knowledge was lost when the gods asked, must they also be gods? And so the eyes of the first men were covered and they could see only what was close. This is how the wisdom and knowledge of the first men was destroyed.' "

Katz reads an even more astonishing biblical passage from an ancient Indian text called the Book of Dzyan, which is the first written account of ages-old legends, passed on in oral tradition before the emergence of written language. They tell of a group of beings who came to Earth in metal ships, thousands of years ago. "These beings," according to the book, "lived to themselves and were revered by the humans among whom they settled. But eventually differences arose among them and they divided their numbers, several of the men and women and some children settling in another city, where they were shining lance that rode on a beam of light. It burst apart in the city of their enemies with a great ball of flame that shot up to the heavens, almost to the stars. All those in the city were horribly burned and even those who were not in the city, but nearby, were burned also. Those who looked upon the lance and the ball of fire were blinded forever afterward. Those who entered the city on foot became ill and died. Even the dust of the city was poisoned, as were the rivers that flowed through it. Men dared not go through it, and it gradually crumbled into dust, and was forgotten by men. When the leader saw what he had done to his own people, he retired to his palace and refused to see anyone. Then he gathered about him those of his warriors who remained and their wives and children, and they entered into their vessels and rose, one by one, into the sky and sailed away, nor did they return."

These ancient texts, and others, provide Katz with an established historical background with which to support his own conjectures on the history and development of mankind.

"The first 20 books of the series have to do with the concept of scientific communities that lose their inner vision and their better sense and have at each other continually, and are more or less caught by their early programming, which confronts and helps to make null and void all of their scientific progress. These societies are vulnerable to their weaknesses because of their coveting of power, a desire for immortality and superiority, and their willful disregard for the plundering of galaxies to satisfy what they assume is their need for energy and life-support, without ever questioning the order of things—and not understanding that the footing of energy out of natural carbon systems is going after energy backwards.

"The reason that I did those first 20 books the way I'm doing them, is that they are an *introduction* to The First Kingdom. The First Kingdom is simply books 21-24, which is the *real* story," Katz reveals.

"I used a comic book form [for this story] because I started in the business when I was 16 and I drew for many years." (Katz' earliest comic book work was published in the late 40s. Through the early-to-mid-50s he contributed to a variety of Standard and Atlas/Marvel titles, under such pseudonyms as Jay Hawk, Vaughn Beering, Alac Justice and David Hadley.) "And then, from the ages of 26-40, I was out of the business, and I went back in again." (From 1969-71, Katz worked for Skywald, Warren, DC and Marvel—again mainly using pseudonyms.)

"The comic was the best form I could use to develop a graphic novel. The way I had it in mind was . . . unfortunately the size is much too small . . . but think about this. If there had never been a motion picture industry, and one Christmas a father brings home a large package—let's say it's 18x20". And the children rip the packaging off and they see this book. It's just a large book with a black cover. But on the cover it says 'King Kong, A Fully Illustrated Novel.' The kids open that book and they have a universe. Every scene is frozen; they can look at it and just savor it. And if it's well-drawn enough *you can* create a universe," Katz affirms.

"Since we are now very visually oriented and much less word oriented, primarily due to television, this is one way perhaps of reintroducing a younger generation to reading. Although, unfortunately I don't have very many young people reading *The First Kingdom*," Katz admits. "My letters come from 17 and 18-year-olds on up. It's an adult book," he says. But he quickly adds, "there's no licentiousness or clinical gore. The fact is the story is intense. "

Katz feels that there is a definite place in the comics scene for a more sophisticated, more literate product. "I think the comic book industry should have a three-pronged approach to publishing," he says. "Number one, there are children's books, like *Richie Rich* and *Casper the Friendly Ghost*, which is fine—it's kind of gentle material. Then, there could be juvenile books, such as what the overgrounds are mostly doing right now. Then there could be graphic novels. They could be as compelling as some of the great motion pictures. The key is the story—the story is everything."

Sadly, Katz feels that the industry is too conservative for this kind of development in the near future. "I know many artists in the business—many who are working for the overgrounds. They will tell me that they have ideas up the kazoo, but they're not about to lose them. So they will repeat and regurgitate the same tired old superhero, or what have you. There's no choice. It is almost impossible for an artist with an original idea to work through the overground system. He has to go to an alternative publishing situation. Many of the best men in the business have astounding ideas but they're afraid of them being stolen. A lot of them get to the point where they have no way of contacting that original energy, either.

"Very few companies are willing to speculate on original ideas," Katz says, and mentions one source of material that will always be available as a substitute. "If a writer is dead long enough and his copyright is no longer extant, well, the sky's the limit. What's astonishing to me is that once you had

Shakespeare, then you had Mickey Spillane, and . . . I don't know what's hot now . . . but there has been a strange curve. I'm not going to make a value judgement, I'll let the readers do that," he says. "Many people whom I consider extremely talented writers and artists have-gone into advertising and allied fields. Unfortunately, the area for a singular ambition becomes less and less of a possibility. It's a completely new concept to let the artists and writers take advantage of the fresh material and the fresh energy that they seek."

Certainly, the *Kingdom* could not have been published in the overgrounds as they are constituted today. The problem is not the partial nudity that is a staple of the books, but rather the multi-layered investigation into areas of serious and controversial thought. The *Kingdom* is the story of Man after the fall, and before the fall, and in the far-flung future. It is a grand mythos, in the tradition of the ancient sp nners of legends. "Yes, it is," Katz concedes. "The difference is that whereas the gods *supposedly* interfered with man and directed his purpose, I show in the *Kingdom* that there are gods, *physical gods* who direct his purpose and interfere with man. There is a hierarchy of gods and a priesthood—they erased the memory of everybody aboard the ship. . . . I'm showing how the priesthood takes over and you have the paralysis of religion, which paralyzes the people, their creativity, their questioning."

BACKGROUNDING THE KINGDOM

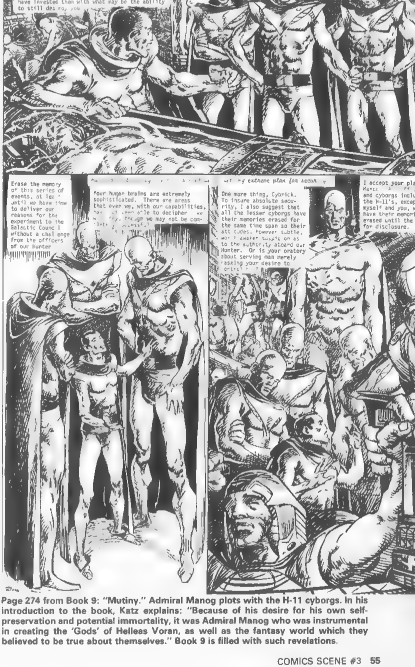
"But all of this by-play between the gods and man and the Oracle is simply by way of developing a perspective, so that when books 21-24 are completed, the readers will have a framework, sort of a psychological glossary with which they can pick up that material. It will be a new way of reading ideas. And I'm sitting on it.

"You know, my fans keep saying to me, 'When's the next book?' Well, they have no idea how badly I want to get to those books! But it must be done properly. You can't rush this," Katz says, "you can't run up Mt. Everest. And even if you could . . . just getting there, going from plateau to plateau and adjusting your body to it, gives you a greater sense of the reality of what you're doing and the majesty of the mountain and the majesty of life itself. And so it's taking time, but, you know, many comic strips have run for more than a few years—his patience and determination are exemplary. "The idea for the *Kingdom* first came to me in 1951," he says softly. "I many years

"Even people in the industry say to me, 'Jack, you set aside 12 years of your life, how could you do a thing like that?' And I say, 'Well, I know somebody who's been pumping gas for 12 years of his life.' Now he's helped a lot of cars to run, and I'm not making a value judgement, it's just that I'd much rather create a graphic novel. And there's nothing wrong with that."

Nothing at all. In fact, Jack Katz has been sitting on *The First Kingdom* for promptly installed as rulers by the awestricken populace. . . . Separation did not bring peace to these people and finally their anger reached a point where the ruler of the original city took with him a small number of his warriors and they rose into the air in a huge, shiny metal vessel. While they were many leagues from the city of their enemies, they launched a great

(Continued on page 65)


Cybrick, I, being a mutant, know the weakness of humans. You are gambling with an unpredictable organism — not all humans have noble ideals. If they created you with superior intelligence, you have imagined them with what may be the ability to outwit any
Very well, what do you suggest we do
Erase the memory of this series of events. Then we shall go home to deliver our reasons for the experiment to the Galactic Council without a civil war from the officers of our number
Four human brains are extremely sophisticated. There are areas that even we, with our capabilities, cannot erase. We do not know how
Our sure thing, Cybrick, to insure absolute security, I also suggest that all the lesser cyborgs have their memories erased for the same time span as their act codes. However Cybrick, I suggest you remain here to the middle ice planet Ice Hunter. Or is your ambitious mood serving more merely to
I accept your plan
and cyborgs inclu
the H-11's, excep
myself and you,
have their memori
erased until the
for disclosure.

Page 274 from Book 9: "Mutiny." Admiral Manog plots with the H-11 cyborgs. In his introduction to the book, Katz explains: "Because of his desire for his own self-preservation and potential immortality, it was Admiral Manog who was instrumental in creating the 'Gods' of Helleas Voran, as well as the fantasy world which they believed to be true about themselves." Book 9 is filled with such revelations.

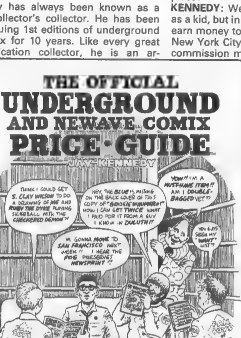
Underground Price Guide— Who, What and Why

By BRUCE SWEENEY

Editor's Note: The ads for the Official Underground and Newave Comix Price Guide *have been appearing since early January but talk about the book, compiled by Jay Kennedy and due from Harmony Books (the people who distribute the* Overstreet Price Guide*) this spring, has been going on for much longer. Some people feel it adds a sense of "establishment" to the undergrounds, something that doesn't belong. Others complain it will ruin the marketplace for true collectors of the early, rare material. We asked our regular underground correspondent,* Bruce Sweeney, *to give us a report. He writes:*

Jay has always been known as a collector's collector. He has been pursuing 1st editions of underground comix for 10 years. Like every great publication collector, he is an archivist, a librarian, a historian, a researcher and often a tireless detective. With the limited capital of a working student he has bought, sold, traded and dealt his way to an enormous collection. He has written dozens of letters, often fruitlessly, tracking down lost copies of obscure regional undergrounds (u.g.s) over the years.

I have also been collecting u.g.s. for years. The market is still small enough that every major collector is familiar with almost everyone else who's chasing the rare books. We constantly trip over each other in mail auctions, when chasing down rare items; when an ad is run in the *Buyer's Guide*, etc. When Jay invited me down to take a look at the project and literally compare notes, I jumped at the chance.



The prices in the guide are not expected to exceed $400-600. First editions of *The Adventuras of Jesus, God Nose, Das Kampf,* and the green covered first edition of *Lenny of Laredo* are among the highest priced items according to editor Jay Kennedy. The book should be out by late Spring.

COMICS SCENE: Jay, how did you come to get into u.g.s in the first place?

KENNEDY: Well, I never read comics as a kid, but in high school, in order to earn money to attend rock concerts in New York City, I would get friends to commission me to do freehand poster-sized blowups of comic book panels. Mostly people had me doing *Spider-Man* and *Conan.* One friend, however, gave me a copy of *Mr. Natural #1* to draw from. It amazed me so I had my brother buy me a few more u.g. comics. A Justin Green drawing on the back cover of *Yellow Dog #21* had me in stitches and I became hooked. I've bought every u.g. comic that I've seen since.

C.S.: You've accumulated an enormous collection of undergrounds. Jay, would you call your collection complete?

KENNEDY: No, of course not. I don't think it's possible to have a truly complete underground comic collection. There are just too many obscure privately-published regional ones to ever get them all.

C.S.: Could you give me some basic history on what other comparable efforts there have been to chronicle or list the u.g.s?

KENNEDY: Let's see . . . there have been quite a few done. The earliest list that I saw was *Eric Fromm's Comix List & Short Stories.* That was in 1972, but it was actually a catalog and wasn't intended to be complete. The first attempt at a complete listing was the *Underground Comix Catalogue Supplement #4* published in September of 1973 by the Real Free Press in Amsterdam. Ironically, it labeled itself a catalog but wasn't. It's a reference work which even includes an artist index.

In this country, the first comprehensive list was prepared by Clay Geerdes as an appendix for *A History of Underground Comix* published by Straight Arrow Books in early 1974. *Artsy Fartsy Funnies,* published later that same year in Holland, also had an appendix listing u.g. comix. The best lists to date were done by Bill Loudin and appeared in *California Comics #2* & *#3.* Those were published in the summer of 1975 and January of 1977.

However, the list with the biggest impact on me, and I think on the collecting of u.g.s in general, was *The In-Complete Underground Comix Checklist* (April 1975) by collector Shelby Kirch. It was unique because it included privately-published regional comics like *Super Baloney, Pax Comics,* and *Pandemonium Express Funnies* and was circulated directly to collectors only. Immediately thereafter you'd start to see these same obscure titles appearing on everybody's want-list. It became a sort of focal point for

collectors who traded with one another through the mails.

C.S.: I recall that it was the first time I'd seen someone develop a list of undergrounds that deviated away from the titles published by Print Mint, Apex Novelties, Last Gasp, and the rest of the u.g. publishers. I remember talking with Shelby Kirch on the phone asking him how he'd come to define "undergrounds." He came up with a follow-up list after that, didn't he?

KENNEDY: Yes, he did the *Son of the In-Complete Underground Comix Checklist* and Kitchen Sink Enterprises has printed up an even more recent version of Kirsch's list which they still distribute free with an order and a request for it. The next major attempt at a list was *The Illustrated Checklist to Underground Comix* put together by Robert Weiner. It's the only pictorial list so far.

C.S.: The last word I had was that the book was successful.

KENNEDY: I sure hope so; that means there's hope for mine.

C.S.: I know that you had expressed an interest back there in doing something more on the order of a reference item.

KENNEDY: That's right, I had originally been thinking that I would do the follow-up book to *The Illustrated Checklist*, but I dropped that idea after it came out. Instead, with the encouragement of James Danky of the Wisconsin State Historical Society, I began my own reference work in 1979. My intent has always been to compile a book so thorough in its scholarliness that it would appeal to libraries as well as collectors.

C.S.: Want to take a shot at defining an underground?

KENNEDY: People's definitions vary widely, some like yourself take narrow definitions and others like me take a broad definition. Originally, u.g. comix were connected to the emergent "youth" or "counter" culture of the late 60s and early 70s. They ignored and/or reacted against the repression of their times and that which was carried over from the McCarthy-Wertham era of the 50s. Consequently, u.g.s are often associated with the topics of sex, drugs, revolution and rock 'n roll. So a narrow definition of an underground comix restricts itself to those comics that deal with these and similar adult themes. Today the topics are more likely to be feminism, gay pride, nuclear power, etc. than anti-war and students' rights sentiments, but one who takes a narrow definition would insist that a comic be counter to the mainstream culture to be truly an underground.

My definition, and the one I'll use in my book, is broader. For me the crux of a comic being underground is its individualistic expression. I define a comic as underground only in juxtaposition to straight comics. Straight comics are factory produced in accordance to a general formula. Undergrounds are individual reflections of their creators and times.

C.S.: Can't the same be said for straight comics?

KENNEDY: Sure, but only in the most general terms: trends towards horror, escapism, more human characters, etc. It's difficult for them to be more direct. One person plots them, one person scripts them, one person draws them, one person inks them, and so on until the product is pretty homogenious in the end. It has to be that way to maintain the consistency that sells 200,000 copies of a title a month. Underground comix on the other hand are comprised of works usually by one, sometimes two, persons, have no production schedules, and rarely try to appeal to more than 10,000 buyers over a one or two *year* period. They're inconsistent. The worst of the undergrounds will mercifully not be seen by many. The best just keep on being reprinted until there is no longer a demand for them. They become classics like *Home Grown Funnies*, now in its thirteenth printing. Hopefully one of the beneficial side effects of *The Underground Price Guide* will be that it increases the demand for the good material so that it will be reprinted sooner so still more people can see it.

C.S.: How did the book happen to go with Boatner-Norton Press?

KENNEDY: Well, I had an agent in New York who tried placing the book with Bantam or a comparable publisher, but I finally decided it would be more advantageous to go with a small independent publisher. The money should work out about the same for me and I was given much greater control because I've known Jerry Weist of the Boatner-Norton Press for years as a fellow collector.

C.S.: Tell me more about the guts of the book; how it'll look.

KENNEDY: The book will be digest-sized (5½" x 8½"), about 300 pages long. There'll be two main sections, one devoted to underground and newave (second generation underground) comix, and the other section, a much smaller one, on groundlevel comics. Each section will list the comix by title in strict alphabetical order and have an artist-index to the comics in that section.

I've tried to set the book up so people can use it to make knowledgeable decisions about buying rare or obscure u.g.s that they may not have even seen. So each title listing gives information on the publisher, date of publication, size, page count, original price, type of paper used, printruns, printing distinctions, current collector's price, and which artist's or writer's work appeared on which page. With that much information people can immediately see for themselves whether the title is a mini-comix, a tabloid, or a standard format comic. Plus they can see whether there are enough pages by their preferred artists to make the comix desirable to them. The book will have other features too, besides the factual listings. Each page will have a quarter-page cover reproduction so about one in every seven or eight u.g. comix will be pictured. Some of the better covers will be reproduced in color.

The introduction takes an interesting approach. It's a fragmented multi-introduction with brief personal observations by people historically important to the development of the u.g. comic movement. Jay Lynch, S. Clay Wilson, and George Metzger have already agreed to participate and I expect to hear soon from Ron Turner, Denis Kitchen, Jack Jackson, and a few others. When read together these observations should give a good introductory account of the history of u.g.s. Bill Griffith of Zippy The Pinhead fame has done the cover for my book and I'm very pleased with it. It's in his Observatory strip vein and spoofs comic book collectors with specific barbs at u.g. collectors.

C.S.: If it started out as a reference item, how did it evolve to being a price guide?

KENNEDY: Well, the grapevine suggested that there were at least two separate price guides in preparation, one in southern California and another in Milwaukee. I've felt for a long time that an underground price guide was inevitable, but when word actually came of guides in the works I became concerned that they'd be, dealer-oriented in the pricing and incomplete or inaccurate in their listings of comics. I already had this reference book in progress so it seemed logical to make the additional step of adding collector's prices to make it a price guide as well. This way I feel certain that we, u.g. collectors, will start with a more reasonable and useful guide, but I'll have to wait and see if other people feel the same way.

C.S.: Do you find that the consideration of it being a Price Guide controversial?

KENNEDY: Definitely, it's already met with some hostility. Many collectors would like one more year to locate a few key titles, several are worried that the prices will be arbitrary and inflationary, and a few morally object in the belief that it will make commodities out of art.

C.S.: I think those are three significant fears, Jay. Would you care to address them?

KENNEDY: I'll try. I certainly gave them a lot of thought before deciding

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STARLOG /57 takes you behind-the-scenes on the making of a new SF/adventure flick, *Megaforce,* due to be released this summer.

If you are (or were) a fan of the *Lost In Space* teleseries, you're going to love our special feature, *Warning, Warning!,* about the *LIS* Robot. Included are interviews with the Robot's designer, operator and "voice," as well as a look at its original concept sketches.

Fans of science fiction and fantasy art will find two heavyweights of the field in STARLOG #57: the dean of space art, Chesley Bonestell, and the designer of *ALIEN* and *Conan,* Ron Cobb.

Also included in the issue is an interview with the first lady of horror, Caroline Munro, a photo feature of the second flight of the Space Shuttle and a pull-out poster from *Star Wars.*

STARLOG #57 ON SALE MARCH 9

to make my reference book a price guide as well. As to collectors wanting one more year to search out bargains, they've had the six months between the first appearance of our ad and the publication date. No, seriously, there has long been a consensus that a price guide was coming. Even Clay Geerdes, a critic of my book, said so two years ago (*Comic World* #139). So truly interested collectors have had ample time to scurry about and I now think it's better in the long-run to establish a reasonable price guide and thus forstall a potentially ill-informed one.

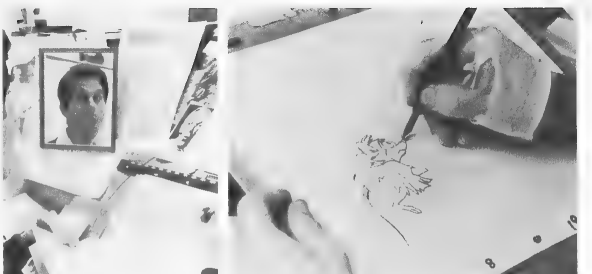
Once I decided on adding prices, I was determined to do everything possible to see that they weren't arbitrary. Dissidents ask, "Who is he to establish prices?" The question implies that I'll be pricing the comix at what I personally feel they are worth. That isn't the case. For years collectors have been chasing and paying for these items without a price guide. They have paid what they feel the comix are worth. Quite a collector's network has evolved and prices already exist. I have and still am actively soliciting pricing input from people involved with the comix. The prices are based on what people are paying now.

As to inflationary concerns, price guides do have a tendency to be inflationary because they typically attract new collectors to the field, consequently increasing the demand and thus the prices. The *Underground Price Guide* will be a lot less inflationary than you might think though, because it will eliminate current variables like snowballing price gouging. Inflation has already hit out-of-print u.g. comix. Major books have doubled in the past three years. A lot of prices are being thrown around and many of them stem from one dealer copying the fantasy asking-price of another dealer, while actual transactions show the price to be less. Dealers are quick to cite an exorbitant price paid by someone with an unusually strong desire for a particular title. Instead of recognizing the price as the eccentricities of one collector, they envision it as a price-setting trend.

Rather than steady growth with the influx of new collectors, we get prices that have been hurdling as one collector after another succumbs to unrealistic prices in the belief that ultimately they are getting a good deal. With pricing input from many collectors these wild fluctuations should cease.

As to those with moral objections to price guides, I applaud their convictions. I, too, wish that art would remain free of the market economy and gravitate to where people would get the most from it. I just don't see how

(Continued on page 65)



John Pomeroy checks a facial expression as he animates. Right: Once the image is Xeroxed onto the cel, inkers smooth over rough places in the lines by hand.

Don Bluth

(Continued from page 29)

sence the animator is entertaining your eyes, your sense of sight."

Gary Goldman explains that he, Don Bluth and a couple of the others are the "old men" of the studio—nearly everyone is under 35. But as he continues to explain facets of his work to me he is smiling with the eagerness and open-eyed wonder of a teenager. It begins to dawn on me that the source of the magic that draws artists to Don Bluth Productions is the artists themselves.

Animator John Pomeroy, who shares space with Goldman, comes into the room. There is a pair of crutches next to his drawing board. Pomeroy is trying to develop a walk cycle for Mr. Ages, who is old and crotchety and gets about on crutches. "There used to be a saying over at Disney," begins Pomeroy, "if you want to find out what a character thinks and what he is all about, do a walk cycle on him. You can tell a lot about people just by observing how people walk. So, if you have a character who's on crutches and particularly feisty, he'll have a particular gait."

"Like Nicoldamus or the owl," chimes in Goldman. "Nicodemus has a very slow gait, wobbling, almost a limp, and he has a humped back. He has a very distinctive way of moving that lets you know what he is all about. Now when you first see the owl, an ancient, omnipotent and awesome figure [voiced by John Carradine], you think he is a very powerful creature, but when you see him walk. . . ."

"It's almost pathetic," interrupts Pomery. "At the end of the scene you become aware that this powerful figure is really very vulnerable. We animators are really surrogate actors with pencils. We try to fill a scene with emotional content. When the owl scene is over you feel like you've been in the presence of God, a very awesome personality, but yet there is something pathetic about him. The owl knows exactly what Mrs. Frisby is going through with the peril of her son dying, because you get the impression, from his walk and movement, that he knows *he* is going to die soon, too. Yet, it's not spoken, it's implied."

"You don't have much time in an animated feature," explains Goldman. "There's only about an hour and 15 minutes and you can't be too talky; you've got to say as much as you can as economically as possible and most of it cannot and should not be done with dialogue."

Good acting and strong characterization can do away with a lot of unnecessary dialogue. "Before the animation begins," explains Goldman, "our characters are very well defined, so that no matter which animator picks up a character in a given scene, the results are consistent. The secret is not to show your skill except in how well you 'hide' behind a character. When you see the shrew in *NIMH*, you hear the voice (Hermione Baddeley) and you see the character, you don't see a caricature of me or John Pomeroy or any particular animator. The shrew has her own character and the animator's job is to make her very believable as the shrew.

"Or Mr. Ages with the voice of Arthur Malet. I defy you, even if you came to know each of us personally, to be able to spot which of us did which scenes. We can spot each other by our drawing styles, but once the drawings go through the clean-up people the tiny differences are eliminated."

At Don Bluth productions it is not usually possible nor is it particularly desirable for one animator to stay with one character throughout the picture. Don Bluth himself explains his approach to "casting" scenes.

"I cast scenes or assign them to the animators who I think have a special affinity for a given scene. A comic scene might go to someone who I know has a really funny sense of humor, dramatic scenes to the people who are exited by the really dramatic moments. Casting is crucial. When you cast right and the animator has a success, they walk a little taller—success breeds more confidence and makes them even better animators. If they ever fail, I know they die a little and I have to go patch that up. We get to know each other pretty well around here, so I can usually tell if a person is really going to be able to pull something off. I try to make sure that everybody here has plenty of space—that they don't feel suffocated creatively, so I don't dictate too much.

"An artist is an egotist. A egotist is a self-oriented person. Animation requires teamwork. So we look for art-

ists who can forget their egos momentarily and work in a give and take situation with his other artists. That's really one of the hardest things to accomplish. If it gets too competitive, they begin to work against one another; sometimes that works, but a lot of times it creates feelings which stop the creative process."

Having just spent several hours going from department to department within the studio, I wonder if there is *anything* that could stem the output of eager energy I see being generated everywhere I turn. Where does all this excitement come from?

"Animation itself is a very exciting thing," smiles Bluth boyishly. "When you look at a picture that's one thing, but the additional charge that happens inside of you when you see your work start to live is a thrill that you can't get anywhere else. There are those little pictures that you draw—first they begin to move, then you see a character with a living spirit, a character that seems to move because of something inside of it. . . . It's a special feeling.

"This is the feeling that attracts young people to animation. There are probably hundreds of young people who would like to get involved in animation, but there are not nearly enough places for them to work. So what happens to many of them is that they live their whole lives with this dream and then, at some point, they have to stab that dream . . . kill it and go to work doing something else. They never get a chance to do the dream, they can't earn a living at it. Classical animation is beautiful art form that is in danger of dying out.

"Animation, full classical animation, is a very hard thing to learn how to do. You have to be a good draughtsman, of course; but more than that, the drawing ability has to be like breathing, effortless, it has to just happen. You have to be an actor, a show man, with a good sense of rhythm, color, timing, a sense of dance and drama. That's why we spent so many years in my garage. Learning those things you have to have a feel for . . . like a violinist learning the feel for where to put his fingers on the strings of a violin."

Classical animation takes a lot of time. The only technical developments that have helped to speed the process up is the use of the Xerox machine to transfer the drawings directly to cels and the use of the Lyon-Lamb video animation system. The Xerox process has come a long way from the sketchy black lines that characterized the process at first. Passing by the Xerox department at Bluth's studio, I watched technicians working with as many as twelve different colors of toner—shades of grays and blues and browns—to do away with the old black outline. The Lyon-Lamb video systems are used for "instant" pencil tests. Use of the system can save two or three days of an animator's precious time. Now, go-aheads or revisions can be made in minutes instead of the hours or days of waiting for black and white pencil tests to come back from the lab. But beyond these few technical improvements the basic art form remains unchanged.

Some animation houses in Hollywood churn out 12,000 feet of film a year in the form of television cartoons, but it will take Bluth productions three years to produce 6,000 feet of classical animation. When complete, *The Secret of NIMH* will contain approximately 1,000 background paintings and between 120,000 to 160,000 drawings done at the rate of two to four per artist per hour.

Don Bluth speaks of animation not as the process of making something move, but making something live. Working with pencil and paper, his artists are preoccupied with generating the spirit of life itself within their characters. In July audiences will decide for themselves how successful Bluth Productions has been when *The Secret of NIMH* is released. But if even a fraction of the enormous enthusiasm for animation that lives within the Bluth brigade is captured, the results will have been worthwhile. ■

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SUPERMAN/SUPERBOY/SUPERBABY'S MISSION FOR PRESIDENT KENNEDY

WHEN I FIRST STARTED READING COMICS AS A KID, JOHN F. KENNEDY WAS PRESIDENT. THE CLOSEST WE'VE EVER COME TO HAVING A SUPERHERO HOLD THE NATION'S HIGHEST OFFICE.

OBVIOUSLY EDITOR MORT WEISINGER FELT THE SAME WAY, AS HE KEPT FEATURING THE YOUNG PRESIDENT IN THE SUPERMAN FAMILY OF TITLES, EVEN GOING SO FAR AS EX-TOUSLING THE SECRET OF SUPERMAN'S DUAL IDENTITY WITH JFK! (ACTION COMICS #369)

"SUPERMAN'S MISSION FOR PRESIDENT KENNEDY" WAS BEING PREPARED WHEN THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE WAS TRAGICALLY ASSASSINATED. AT THE BRAINS OF PRESIDENT JOHNSON, DC PUBLISHED THE STORY (WHICH DEALT WITH KENNEDY'S PHYSICAL FITNESS PROGRAM) IN EARLY 1964.

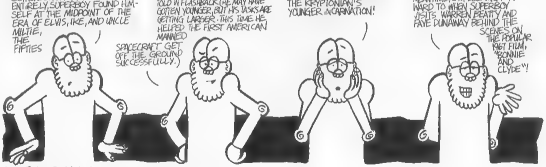
THEN, AS TODAY, DC WAS PUBLISHING THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERBOY, WHICH SEEMINGLY TOOK PLACE IN THE 1950'S, A SUPPOSITION BORNE OUT WHEN THE LAD OF STEEL ENCOUNTERED THE NOTORIOUS BONNIE AND CLYDE (SUPERBOY #114). SPONSORED ON BY THE SUCCESS OF THE THEN CURRENT FILM, BASED ON THE CRIMINAL DUO).

AS THE SEVENTIES ARRIVED, SOMEONE REALIZED THAT BY KEEPING SUPERBOY IN THE 50'S, IT IN EFFECT AGED THE PRESENT DAY SUPERMAN TREMENDOUSLY. SO RESCRATCHING THE FORTIES ENTIRELY, SUPERBOY FOUND HIMSELF AT THE MIDPOINT OF THE ERA OF ELVIS, IKE, AND UNCLE MILTIE, THE FIFTIES

THIS PAST DECADE (OUR TIME) WASN'T "GOOD" STILL FOR SUPERBOY, WHO WAS MOSTLY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 60'S, WHICH IS WHY THE RECENT "SUPERBOY'S MISSION FOR PRESIDENT KENNEDY" WAS SOLD WITH A WHACKING MAY WHO GOTTEN YOUNGER, BUT HIS JOKES ARE GETTING LARGER. THIS TIME HE HELPED THE FIRST AMERICAN MANNED SPACECRAFT GET OFF THE GROUND SUCCESSFULLY.)

NEEDLESS TO SAY, IT WAS JARRING FOR THOSE OF US WHO REMEMBERED THE SUPERMAN-JFK MEETING TO SEE KENNEDY ENCOUNTER THE KRYPTONIAN'S YOUNGER INCARNATION!

I'M OVER THE SHOCK NOW, HOWEVER, AND FULLY EXPECT TO SEE SUPERBABY'S MISSION TO PREVENT KENNEDY'S COME TIME AROUND AGAIN IN THE NEAR FUTURE. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO WHEN SUPERBOY MEETS WARREN BEATTY AND FAYE DUNAWAY BEHIND THE SCENES ON THE POPULAR FILM, "BONNIE AND CLYDE"!



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Fandom

What is INTERFAN?

By JAMES SAMUELS

Almost every fan has wished at one time or another that he could someday create his own comics characters . . . featuring them in adventures written and drawn with his own raw talent. Many sincere enthusiasts actually do spend vast amounts of time and effort developing stories, laboriously sketching pages—only to have this work lie abandoned.

Sure, there are fan-produced zines and other alternative press publications, but not all of these budding creators know the whys and whereabouts of making contact and guiding their masterpieces into print. So, to fill the gap between producer and publisher, INTERFAN was born.

The organization was created in 1975 by writer Steve Clement, to provide a medium for the fan press to receive a dependable flow of amateur material. Clement, a resident of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, had been a life-long comics fan and zine contributor. In 1975 he decided to form INTERFAN, an organization that would supply fanzines with material while at the same time giving amateurs an opportunity to learn by doing.

Clement assembled a group of professional artists and writers to serve as advisers. People like Jim Shooter, Joe Sinnott and Sam Maronie were drafted into service. While Shooter and Sinnott functioned primarily as consultants, the actual day-to-day chores of evaluating artwork, assigning scripts and other paperwork fell to Clement and Maronie.

INTERFAN was a huge success from the start, due largely to an influx of high-quality contributors and Clement's considerable fanzine contacts. Soon INTERFAN artists began appearing in *The Buyer's Guide, The Comics Journal* and other publications. Clement even achieved limited success agenting members' work to a variety of men's magazines and UFO books; they weren't the classiest assignments, but they paid these amateurs a few bucks and more importantly, put them into professional print.

As the two editors were pursuing comics careers of their own, free hours for INTERFAN became fewer and far-between. Maronie resigned in 1976; to fill his position Clement tapped one of the more enthusiastic of the new members—Jim Bertges.

Since 1977 author Bertges has been at the helm, and in a recent interview he managed to shed some light on just what INTERFAN is.

"INTERFAN is a learning experience," explained the 31-year-old California resident. "It's also a means of growing by one's mistakes and from other people's limitations and strong points. This is a group of individuals who enjoy creating and who are able to get their work on to the printed page, rather than leaving it to gather dust inside a drawer.

"Basically, my job is to coordinate the work of various artists and writers with magazines that will use the material—trying to get together people scattered across the country who share common interests and the desire to put out the best comics they possibly can."

As INTERFAN chief, Bertges is in constant communication with nearly 25 artists located throughout the United States. Together with art director (and pro comics penciller) Sam DeLaRosa, Bertges conducts a never-ending traffic between himself and fanzine editors, funneling a stream of his members' work into their blank pages.

For example, fanzine A needs a 10-page strip to fill out its contents. Said fanzine contacts Bertges (or vice-versa). Bertges assigns a script to the artist best suited for the job and eventually the zine gets its strip and both penciller and author see their work in print. So in effect INTERFAN is a clearinghouse that brings all the parties together

"It's always been a real problem for fanzine editors to find really high-quality work to fill their pages. Most of the time, zines are put together by very few people in a very limited geographic area; with INTERFAN they have their choice of a large pool of artists and writers for a regular source of material.

"Our method of working is much like the pro shops," Bertges explained. "We work as a team with everyone contributing their talents to the creation of a whole

"Since the writers and artists live across the country, that puts a damper on working 'Marvel Style' [plot discussed between artist and writer and *then* the script follows the pencilled pages] so the writer's scenario has to be structured with complete panel breakdowns and full dialogue.

"An artist is allowed to reject any story that he feels is not appropriate

Sam DeLa Rosa and Doug Hazelwood bring us this lovely illustration of CBS Saturday morning star, Isis.

for him. He is also allowed to make any changes he believes may improve the script. The pencils are inspected by the editor and then passed down the line to a letterer, inker, etc. until the story is considered ready for publication and sent to a particular fanzine."

The entire process takes some time, the editor explained, because of the distances involved and the fact that everyone is usually working on more than one project at a time. But Bertges feels that this process is necessary to make each production as good as it can humanly be.

"That is a lot of what INTERFAN is all about—doing comics the slickest way possible, giving each job 100% effort. Something like this can only be done by people who love the medium as much as we do."

Aside from assigning stories and

Mark Lamport's own version of Halloween — with chilling results.

ART © 1982 MARK LAMPORT

CHARACTER © 1982 DC COMICS INC.

DC inker Jerry Ordway's view of the Spectre and his 1960s adversaries.

a single penny for these efforts; in actuality, Bertges foots most of the postage fees, phone charges and other overhead from his own pocket. He only half-kiddingly admitted that his monthly postal expenses are often staggering. Why is he doing this?

"It's a hobby," he laughed. "This is something I'm doing, for my own satisfaction and fun; when it stops being enjoyable, then I'll quit. But it's just great working with so many talented, creative people who seem to enjoy a more mature, challenging type of storyte ling. It seems like we all really need to get that feedback on each other's work and to find out from one another just how we're coming along.

"For me, my real interest in comics is not with the pro books; they're doing very limited, formula stuff. I've been a hard-core collector since 1963 and I've seen just about everything come and go five or six times.

"Today, turn to the alternative press for my comics entertainment, as I feel most other serious readers are doing. There are all sorts of enjoyable fanzines and things like *Cerebus* and *Etcetera*. It is these formats that truly allow an artist and writer to really let himself go and be as creative as possible. I feel that with INTERFAN I can become actively involved with such entertaining projects."

While INTERFAN artists and scripters are not paid for their creations, they do gain a valuable amount of experience and exposure. While the organization does not actively attempt to place artists with pro houses like Marvel or DC, several talented pencillers have made the jump up to the big leagues.

Former INTERFANers who have gone on to bigger and better things include people like Gene Day, who has inked Carmine Infantino's *Star Wars* pencils and now draws *Master of Kung Fu;* Jerry Ordway, an inker currently laboring on Roy Thomas' *All Star Squadron;* and Rick Burchett, who has sold drawings to STARLOG, and was recently featured in an issue of *Charlton Bullseye*. No doubt there will be others.

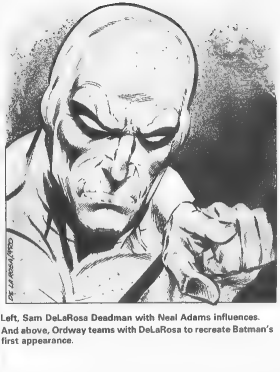
Perhaps many reading these words are fledgling artists and writers and would like to join INTERFAN, but have some questions: How good do I have to be? How do I get someone to look at my work? If I join, what will be expected of me?

"We always are looking for new people," Bertges proclaimed. "We will

art, Bertges spends much of his time searching for new outlets in which to place INTERFAN work. He religiously checks the review columns in such publications as *The Buyer's Guide, The Comics Journal* and *Beautiful Balloons* a column in *TBG)* for notices of new zines that could be potential showcases. He has also taken ads in *The Fandom Directory* to let prospective editors, pencillers and writers know that they are out there.

Bertges' task of nearly singlehandedly managing the vast amounts of correspondence, editing and other red tape is indeed herculean. He juggles these time-consuming duties with his full-time job (as a public relations man for Film Ventures International), his wife and child, and scripting chores. Add to this the fact that he receives not

No, it's not Mighty Mouse, it's the Atomic Mouse by Sam DeLaRose.



Left, Sam DeLaRosa Deadman with Neal Adams influences. And above, Ordway teams with DeLaRosa to recreate Batman's first appearance.

Missed An Issue?

COMICS SCENE

BACK ISSUES

#1: Interviews with Stan Lee, Jim Shooter on Marvel; history of Scorchy Smith; Sy Barry on drawing the Phantom, Movie Hero preview; Heavy Metal; Saturday morning superheroes; and Paul Levitz on the Triumph of Comics Fandom.

#2: Jack Kirby talks about 40 years in comics; Joe Sinnott, Jim Starlin interviews; John Byrne on creators' rights; David and Leslie Newman on writing for the movies; Carl Barks preview; and, of course, Judge Dredd!

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use about anybody who will work. That has to be the key word here—work. There are a lot of enthusiastic people who contact us, but when it comes down to actually producing finished work—Well—

"There is a healthy turnover of people. We have a central 'core' of steady and dependable artists, as well as a certain percentage who drop out. I would love to see *any* artist's material, but there is an even greater need for writers; I'm the only INTERFAN writer at the present time."

Bertges welcomes potential contributors to contact him at 1332 Currant Avenue, Simi Valley, California 93065. Artists are encouraged to submit samples of their work, but asked to please include postage for any material they wish returned.

After spending five years with INTERFAN, does Bertges see the organization going in any particular direction?

"Nineteen eighty-two is really going to be a big year for us," he enthused. "We're going to have a big, new fanzine ready that will showcase the best of the INTERFAN artists. Along with this I'm going to give INTERFAN as much exposure as possible through the magazine, advertisements and other channels; I'd like to reach the point where the fanzine editors will think of us first for a source of material. It's such an ideal arrangement for all the parties involved and we can do some really wild, creative things together.

"For the past six months I've been receiving a lot of really fine art, and I can't wait for it to come out. I think that's one of the biggest things for any newcomer—to open that fanzine and actually see your work on the printed page. It's still a big thrill for me even after all this time."

Bertges publishes an irregularly-scheduled newsletter called *Elmo* ("It doesn't stand for anything in particular; it's just a name no one ever uses any more!") which chronicles the latest goings-on in the organization. The editor adds a humorous touch, naming each edition of the letter after the Universal *Frankenstein* film series (i.e. Son of Elmo . . . Bride of Elmo . . . etc.).

He admitted that one of the most satisfying aspects about his INTERFAN work has been the many friends he has made among members and fanzine publishers.

"For the most part they are really a terrific bunch of people; they all really *love* comics. The fanzine editors particularly have had a tough go of it lately, with the problems in the economy and all; but they're really hanging in there, and I admire them for that.

"There have been some low spots, but on the whole I've loved every minute of working for INTERFAN. I think the organization is headed for some really super projects in the time to come and I can't wait to be a part of them." ■

U.G. Guide

(Continued from page 58)

that can be done in a market society. In absence of an alternative, I've compromised.

C.S.: What are some of these prices going to be on some of the real high price books?

KENNEDY: Disregarding a few instances of wild one-time deals, the highest price comix top out at $400 to $600 and there aren't many of these.

C.S.: What would some of these be?

KENNEDY: The first editions of *The Adventures of Jesus, God Nose* and *Das Kampf.* The green covered first edition of *Lenny of Laredo,* S. Clay Wilson's Lawrence Kansas 1967 looseleaf portfolio and some others that I don't recall at the moment.

C.S.: What do you hope this book will achieve, both personally and as an archivist?

KENNEDY: Well, personally, I hope it becomes the forerunner to a project that necessitates a regular update with undiscovered undergrounds and new titles added; prices being altered; errors being corrected and information refined. I'd love to continue with this. As an archivist, my hope is to see the undergrounds and their creators finally get the credit that they deserve. Their work should be sought after and noticed after all this time.

C.S.: How are you going to get all these prices?

KENNEDY: Once the first draft is done, I'll send copies of the book out to significant people that have been marketing u.g. collectibles, people like Ron Turner, Bob Sidebottom, Bill Emerson, Denis Kitchen, Dave Toplitz and others that have a feel for print-runs, price history and might have kept records. Once those figures are in we can sort them out for each book. Admittedly a portion will be estimating and judgment calls.

C.S.: When these people have to estimate, then what will the variables be?

KENNEDY: Some of it will be guessing I'm sure, but I expect they'll be using variables like scarcity, age, degree of polish & significance of the artists involved to arrive at an estimate.

C.S.: Why is it that your book doesn't include the European u.g.s? Several, like the Dutch Tanteleny line and the British seem to present very similar formats and points of view. Was it a chauvinistic motivation?

KENNEDY: Not at all. The book includes all known North American items, which includes the Canadians. I just didn't have the resource to broaden it to every known u.g. published on the planet. Perhaps up ahead, but presently this task is mammoth enough. I don't even personally collect the foreign u.g.s. ■

Jack Katz

(Continued from page 55)

couldn't do anything about it for many years—the first book came out in December of '74. So it germinated. My ideas changed a little, with developments in science, and I could employ different things to support different theories. But basically it's the same.

"I was in the building trades," Katz says of the time when he wrote the *Kingdom.* "I had walked out on the comic book industry. I was going bananas! I had about five scripts in the house and one of them really blew my mind. It was by someone who is now a so-called famous comic book writer. It was about this vampire who's walking through the streets and looking at people with an evil eye. And I looked at it and I said, 'What am I doing? I can't go on. I can't do it any more. I can't repeat the same bad habits; I can't keep kidding myself.' Hal Foster laid down the foundations for an appreciation of man's form and the potential for a graphic novel. I knew that comics were potentially an adult medium.

"While I was in the building trades I had a partner—we used to run around, he had an idea that I was working on. Sometimes we would have to live in our van because we were, say, adding an extension to a house—doing everything, the electrical work, everything. It was very interesting. When we had to do the electrical work we'd get a book. We almost got killed once. I fell off a roof twice. My side will never be the same—it was the same side twice.

"Anyway, I was writing at night and working during the day. So my partner said to me, 'Look Jack, what are you doing at night? I see you with the light on and you're driving me crazy.' I said to him, 'Look, I'm writing a book.' He said, 'Oh. I thought you were one of those!' He says, 'This is not going to work.' He gave me the van, he took his tools and bought a car and went down to Los Angeles. I promptly sold the van for $125. I know I was ripped off but I needed the money," Katz admits with a laugh.

"I had just barely enough money to put together six months rent for this apartment in Oakland. I had seven and a half rooms, with 14-foot ceilings, plus a backyard as big as the whole place. I lived in one tiny room and shut down the whole rest of the place. Someone had given me a radio, so I used to put on the talk shows at night so I could fall asleep. And I completed the *Kingdom* there."

The *Kingdom* has been the subject of some controversy, in fan and pro circles alike. Some argue about its content, others about Katz' style. Still others say there's too much violence and nudity. Katz has a ready answer for that.

"About 85 percent of my books have only two panels of violence. A careful look through my books will show a maximum of five panels of violence in an entire book. It's because my people are so real—the reader is drawn into the books—that the violence becomes a significant part. You feel for the characters. The violence is not gratuitous, it's not mindless. It's not there to substitute for substance and story . . . it's part of life.

"*The First Kingdom* is continually a series of questioning, asking *why?* instead of taking patent leather horses and making them perform through the traditional, banal existence of the hero and villain. . . . I don't have one hero. I have many different societies interacting at the same time.

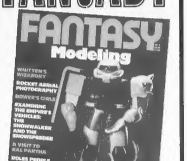
"Let's take a look at the nudity. There may be, I would say, six totally nude people. In all the other drawings the genital areas are covered up. The nudity is not done for titillation or to boost sales. "What I try to display is the beauty of the human body, in every way I can. This is the thing that is constantly being destroyed. It is the most precious thing in the world. We destroy it by grossing ourselves out with foods, by abusing it in every possible way. To me the body is extremely beautiful and I will worship and glorify the male and female body as much as I can. It is the poetry of life. The bodies I draw are lean, they're sensitive, they're sensual, they're sexual. They feel the air about them. They breathe—they are vulnerable. The body is the universe."

And now Katz has let enough layers fall away to speak to the heart of his creation: "The *Kingdom* is a spiritual quest; it's a quest for self-discovery. *The First Kingdom* is like birth. With birth comes the opportunity for adventure. And through adventure, perhaps discovery—personal discovery and extra-personal discovery."

And will the quest continue? Will there be a Second Kingdom? "To me," Katz explains, "a graphic novel has to have a beginning, a middle and an end. There will be no Second Kingdom and Third Kingdom. Jack Kirby keeps telling me, 'Oh, Jack, you're just going to keep doing it, you'll be addicted.' No, I will not be addicted. But I will say one thing. The last two words of the last book, Book 24, are 'The Beginning.' Now, I know I'll probably be stoned by my fans, but if you read the entire novel you will understand the significance of those words." ■

Next issue: *In Part 2, Jack Katz talks about his days in the overground comics field, his early childhood and influences on his art.*

EXPERIENCE THE FANTASY



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GENE COLAN has made an impact unparalleled in comic art, going from war and romance stories in the fifties to *Iron Man* and *Daredevil* at Marvel in the sixties and now *Wonder Woman* and *Batman* at DC. Colan, who set a record with his long stay on *Tomb of Dracula*, is the master of mood and character art. Don McGregor went to Colan's house and discussed his long, varied and celebrated career. Next issue we present part one.

THE GATES ARE FLUNG WIDE AND THY PASSAGE IS HERALDED BY THE DEATHLESS CRIES OF HIS GUARDIAN BEASTS.
HIS SEARING BRAND SHALL BE EVERMORE EMBLAZONED ON THY CONSCIOUSNESS: ITS FIERY MEANING SHALL MAKE THEE FREE.

Gene Colan's *Dark Force*.

Is Legion Fandom dead?

FANDOM: Next issue we get very specific and take a look at the rise and fall of *Legion of Super-Heroes* fandom. Mike Flynn, credited for starting the cohesive fan movement over 10 years ago, recounts how a simple idea grew into a monster and why it has quieted down and almost forgotten compared to the fan movement surrounding the *X-Men* in the late 70s and the *New Teen Titans* today.

BEFORE SNUFFY SMITH there was a funny little guy named Barney Goggle. Ron Goulart traces the history of the long-running comic strip and shows us where Google and Smith came from and how one wound up replacing the other.

PLUS: Richard and Wendy Pini enter the Guest Spot . . . Part Two of our chat with Dr. Osamu Tezuka and his work with Japanese animation and comics . . . our delayed look at the *Conan* merchandising you can expect to find with the film's May release . . . a preview of a book reprinting the first year of the *Prince Valiant* comic strip in its original size . . . news, profiles, spotlights on interesting people on the comics scene and of course, some unexpected goodies!

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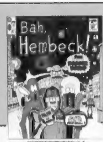

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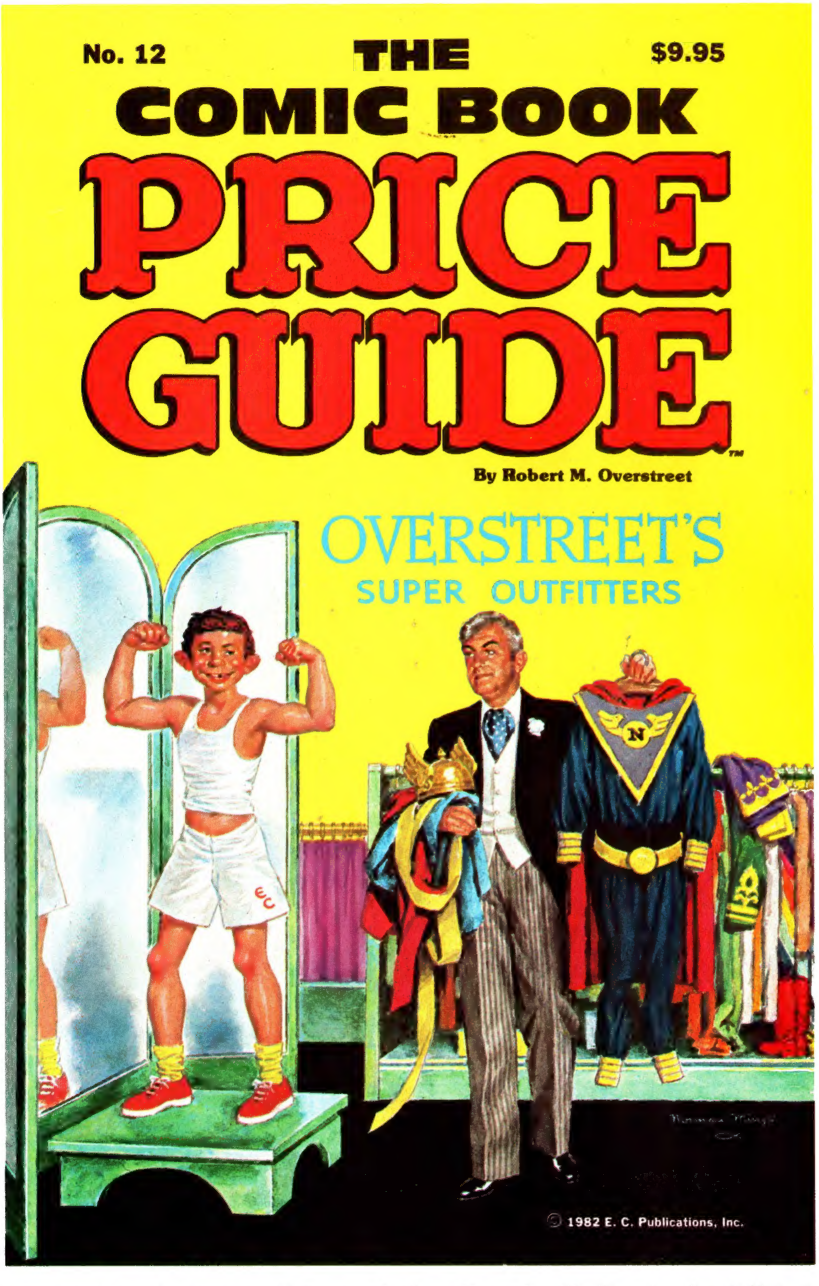

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